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ABSTRACT

Emphasizing the importance of involving educators, parents, and both male and female students in improving schools' treatment of boys, this manual is designed to assist schools in improving secondary education for boys in Australia. The manual presents a six-step strategy for enhancing boys' education that obtains support from teachers, ensures constructive input from parents, asks boys about their needs, and keeps girls in the picture. General guidelines and information to be presented in workshop format are included for each of the six steps, which are as follows: (1) identifying the level of concern about boys during staff or parent meetings; (2) presenting information to staff and parents linking health outcomes, boys' school attitudes, and markers such as literacy; (3) benchmarking, to translate concern into realistic targets which can be tracked as schools take steps to improve boys' outcomes; (4) involving the parents, especially fathers, in the process; (5) asking the boys about school attitudes and gathering support for school change through surveys or through use of an accompanying photopak; and (6) asking the girls for their views on school problems, with care in arranging process of feedback to boys. Practical examples from a range of schools are provided. Eight appendices include overhead transparency materials, sample benchmarks, and a statement detailing a boys' education strategy. (KB)

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IMPROVING BOYS' EDUCATION
A manual for schools

Richard Fletcher
MEN AND BOYS PROGRAM

Family Action Centre
University of Newcastle
1997

The Family Action Centre
The University of Newcastle

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Foreword

The Family Action Centre is pleased to be the umbrella organisation for the Men and Boys Project and for developments supporting work with boys and young men.

In a decade of work with families the need to develop a broader approach to men and boys has been clear to us. This manual for schools provides an important tool for those wishing to improve boys education and contribution to society. The strategies suggested here provide a framework for developing practice which is truly in the interests of boys and men and those of girls and women. Improving schools' treatment of boys and boys' treatment of eachother and others is an urgent task for our society.

Di James

Director
Family Action Centre
The University of Newcastle

Acknowledgments

This manual is a distillation of discussions with many teachers, administrators, parents and boys. Although at the time of these discussions the idea of this manual had not arisen, the ideas and comments of many people have helped to form the information included in this document. Since no accurate records of these discussions were kept, schools rather than individuals are named. However responsibility for the material rests with the author.

Thanks to the following staff and, in many cases, the parents and students of these schools for their contribution to the material presented here:

Albury HS, A.B. Paterson College, Boort Secondary College, Belmont HS, Berrigan PS, Black Springs PS, Biloela HS, Berringan PS, Bomaderry HS, Berry PS, Cootamundra HS, Chatham HS, Central Coast Grammar, Cardiff HS, Campbell Town District HS, Condoblin HS, Cannon Hill Anglican College, Culburra PS, Cambewarra PS, Dubbo HS, Dungog HS, Erina Heights HS, Edensor Park PS, Evans HS, Finley HS, Flora Hill Secondary College Farrar HS, Goulburn HS, Gateshead HS, Golden Square Secondary College, Hunter Valley Grammar, Ingleburn HS, Illaroo Road PS, Jesmond HS, Jerilderie PS, Kahibah PS, Kinross Wolaroi School, Kurri Kurri HS, Kooringal HS, Kotara HS, Kiama HS, Shoalhaven HS, Lake Macquarie HS, Launceston Grammar School, Medowie PS, Maitland PS, Merriwa Central School, Mount View HS, Nowra Technology HS, Newcastle Grammar School, Nelson Bay HS, Newcastle HS, North Albany Senior HS, Oberon HS, Portland HS, Prospect HS, Rutherford PS, St Edward's College, Sylvania Heights HS, Shoal Bay PS, Singleton PS, Shoalhaven HS, St Laurence's College, Trinity School, Scone HS, St Helens Park PS, St Joseph's HS, St Pius X HS, St Paul's HS, St Mary's HS, St Francis Xavier's College, San Clemente HS, St Catherine's College, St Clare's HS, St Joseph's Campus, St Peter's Campus, St Mary's Campus, Tocal Agricultural College, Tomerong PS, South Wagga PS, Wallsend HS, Wallsend PS, West Wyalong HS, Whitebridge HS ,Wellington HS, Wallsend PS, Wingham HS, Waratah HS,

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Introduction

This manual is designed to assist schools to improve boys' education. The ideas presented here have been developed over the last ten years in workshops and discussions with schools from all areas of Australia. Even though boys' difficulties are the focus of much activity in education, the field is a new one and so the material presented here is very much a work-in-progress.

After the publication of the book **Boys in Schools** in November 1995, it became clear from the teachers' responses, that, while accounts of programs and activities were important, a more detailed and step-by-step approach to boys' education strategies would be welcome. In particular, schools were finding that one-off programs, while meeting immediate needs, did not provide a long term solution to boys' problems. It became clear that the problem areas for boys spanned curriculum, motivation, discipline, career and identity issues. Whole school approaches, even though they were known to require considerable planning and discussion, were recognised as essential for addressing boys' needs.

This point was illustrated at a workshop recently. One enthusiastic high school teacher had introduced a Boys and Relationships program to his school. The program worked well for the boys who were withdrawn from classes to participate. But after two years of running the program by himself, the teacher questioned the extra energy and time needed and felt frustrated that other staff were not actively addressing the boys' difficulties. For the sake of teachers, the whole school needs to engage with the issues surrounding boys' schooling.

Another important group to consider, in developing a boys' education strategy, are the fathers. While the idea of involving parents is not new, involving fathers in learning situations with students is certainly not an accepted part of school practice.

The idea of actively involving dads in the boys' strategy marks an important difference between the development of girls' strategies in the 1970s and 198's and the emerging boys' strategies of the 1990s. Parents were not considered central to raising girls' sights and motivating them to try non-traditional subjects such as physics and metalwork. Teachers in the era of girls' education (the writer of this manual included) saw themselves as championing a better life for girls, if necessary against the fears or preferences of the girls' parents.

Fathers are recognised as a potent influence on boys' notions of proper masculine activity. They cannot simply be seen as irrelevant or old-fashioned to be side stepped in developing a boys' education strategy. Their influence and ideas (and those of the mothers too) will need to be included in the development of activities for boys.

Boys have their own ideas too. Taking the trouble to investigate boys' perceptions of the school has not been thought necessary in the past. But the experience of schools who have

sought boys' views is that, asked in a setting free from ridicule, they give appropriate and thoughtful answers. For staff who have experienced the boys' use of put downs or cynical materialism, the humane and sensitive values suggested by the boys' answers in these settings is often a surprise.

Girls' views are also relevant here. Previous research in the gender equity area has documented girls' dismay and frustration at some of the behaviours of boys in school. Since the aim of developing a boys' strategy is to improve boys' education and that of girls (rather than at the expense of girls), it is necessary to bring girls' views into the discussion.

The layout of the manual reflects the importance of these four groups: staff, parents, boys and girls. But although the flow chart below suggests a particular sequence of engagement for the different groups, the actual pattern of events will vary between schools and over time.

It is possible to begin addressing boys' needs without inviting each of these four groups to participate. Schools must make pragmatic decisions in regard to their commitment of time and energy to new initiatives and to the timing of each element. Nevertheless, it is taken as given in the approach of this manual that engaging parents and inviting boys and girls to participate are necessary steps to addressing boys' needs. Therefore it will be assumed that schools intend to include all four groups in their efforts to address boys' needs.

Developing an effective Boys' Education Strategy

Staff Discussion

Points to be covered in the discussion (which may take place over a number of meetings as well as during a staff development day):

i) identifying the level of concern among staff;

ii) presenting information to develop a broad framework for considering boys' needs;

iii) canvassing the available boys' initiatives and choosing manageable projects to introduce;

iv) designing a structure (eg. a committee/ task force/ interest group) to carry forward the work of developing the strategy.

Parent Discussion

In the discussion with parents, important issues to be addressed include:

i) identifying parents' concerns about their sons (and daughters);

ii) presenting information to support parents' interest in improving outcomes for boys;

iii) the need for both mothers and father's input and the importance of fathers and father-figures in developing boys into fine men;

iv) feedback to the parents from the needs assessment with boys.

Boys' Discussion

Identifying boys' needs (as opposed to their wants) depends on creating a situation where the boys feel safe to express their opinions without risking humiliation. The areas of possible discussion by the boys span the whole range of activities carried out by the school. But it is also important to engage boys in a discussion of their notions of manhood. This will provide a context for building attitude change to improve the culture of the school.

Girls' Discussion

Documenting girls' needs is important, of course, for the sake of the girls. But seeking girls' views of boys can assist in developing boys' understanding too.

Who Leads?

Although concerns about boys' education have been raised by both teachers and parents, it is teachers who are the ones to formally take up the issue. Once staff have had a chance to consider their options and to decide on appropriate action they will also need to arrange discussion with parents, boys and girls.

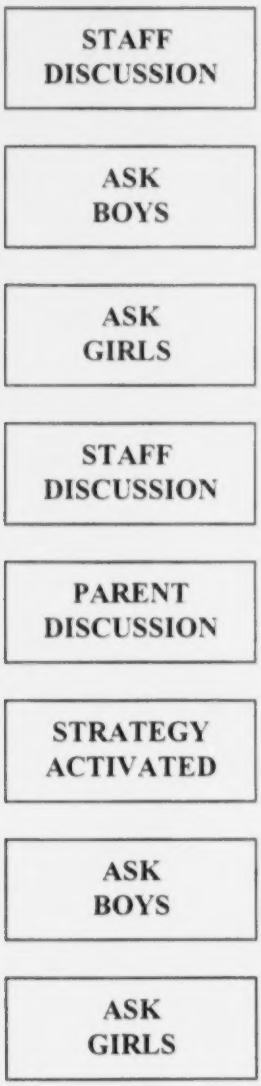
The sequence suggested here is to ask the boys before asking the parents. This is to allow the use of the information from the boys to motivate the parents (particularly fathers) to be involved and to help create a positive framework. Asking the girls can be arranged at this time or later in the sequence since, in a general sense, we have had input on girls' needs over some years.

It is suggested that the boys' comments and ideas be reported back to the teachers before the parent meeting. By allowing teachers to respond to the boys' suggestions, by offering possible changes to school practice before the parent discussion, an indication of teachers' willingness to take boys' suggestions seriously and the possibility of immediate action is communicated to the parents.

It is also expected that teachers (and parents) will find many of the boys' comments and

suggestions to be refreshingly thoughtful and constructive. So that staff will be better able to ensure an optimistic and enthusiastic tone to the meeting with parents if they have had a chance to hear the boys' views beforehand.

Conducting the meetings with each group is, of course, only the first step. Feeding the response of the teachers and parents back to the boys (and girls) is one obvious requirement in developing the boys' engagement in building a superior learning environment in the school. The whole process of developing a strategy is best thought of as a series of loops, where each group feeds ideas into the process and builds awareness and commitment in return.



STEP 1 Identifying the level of concern

This step is similar for staff seminars and parent meetings.

In an intensely interactive system such as a school, there are many informal mechanisms for identifying concerns among staff and parents. For the school to take action however, a more formal, public discussion is essential. At a staff meeting or parent forum, there is an opportunity to gauge the level of concern about boys and to gain consensus for developing a strategy to improve the schools' approach to the boys in its care.

Gauging concern can be done very simply by asking people to rate their degree of worry (or concern) on a scale from one "not worried at all" to ten "extremely worried". When this exercise has been used in staff meetings, it is often a surprise to individual staff members to discover how many of their colleagues are worried.

At a recent high school staff seminar we began with this question about concern. The teacher who organised the seminar on behalf of the school, warned me that not everybody thought that this seminar was a good idea. A major task, he suggested, would be to convince resistant or indifferent teachers to bother discussing boys' issues. And as the staff settled into their seats for the seminar, the group along the back two rows did indeed look as if they would rather be somewhere else. With the possibility of a negative reaction in mind, I began the seminar with a statement along these lines:

> *Some of you might be wondering what all the fuss is about, why we are taking this time to talk about boys. I am going to ask you to rank yourselves on scale of one to ten. If you have come along here today , thinking that the boys in this school are basically doing OK and you are simply curious what all the discussion is going to be about, give yourself a One. If on the other hand you are very concerned about what is happening to boys in this school then put yourself at ten.*

The scores, which were tallied on the whiteboard in front of the group were as follows:

Degree of Concern	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of Teachers	0	0	1	2	2	9	15	20	5	2

There was keen interest by the staff to see the results of the tally. As the picture of concern took shape on the whiteboard, there were expressions of surprise, not only at the figures but at the individuals who placed themselves high on the scale.

The public nature of this process is important. In many schools where teachers have known each other for some time, there is a strong perception that certain staff members are "progressive thinkers" or "conservative", "interested" or "not wanting to get involved".

There is a belief that the attitudes and opinions of staff are well known and expressions such as "You know what he'll say about this topic" are frequent. But teachers' reactions to boys' issues cannot, in my experience, be predicted from their past attitudes to girls' issues or to school issues in general. This applies to female staff as well. Many of those who have been the strongest advocates for attention to boys' education have previously been advocates for girls. Rather than seeing a competition between boys' and girls' education, they see boys' education as a logical development from the extensive work done with girls.

When staff are asked to indicate their level of concern in this fashion, it is often those who have not been prominent in welfare issues who show a strong concern for the social aspects of what is happening to boys. This is one of the strengths of the boys' education debate which can used by schools in developing consensus for a new approach.

There are, of course, negatives as well as positives in being a "new" issue, as boys' education undoubtedly is. On the positive side, it is possible, in considering a strategy for the school, to cross well-established areas of difference among staff to work co-operatively for the sake of the boys. Staff will also, in many cases, be interested in discussing "boys' issues" whereas they will feel that "girls issues" have been debated at length (speaking as the father of three girls in school at the moment, it seems perfectly clear to me that , although we have discussed the issues often, we still have a long way to go to provide excellent schooling for girls).

In some cases, the boys' education debate can reinvigorate the discussion of the whole issue of gender. At one primary school, shorts for girls were introduced as part of the school uniform after the boys' education issue heightened the profile of gender issues in the school, turning the discussion of uniforms from simply one of "taste" to one which included gender equity. "If we are going to tell the boys not to be stereotyped, we can hardly insist the girls all wear dresses while the boys wear shorts, can we?" commented the principal.

The negative aspect of being a "new" topic is that the very nature of the issues to be faced is far from clear. In the example of the "concern tally" given above, the clustering of concerns at the 7-10 level did not mean that all the teachers thought alike about gender issues. Nor did it mean that all those teachers were worried about the same aspects of boys' experiences. Far from it. Judging by the banter and comments flying around the room during the process, it was clear that there were major differences among the staff about gender issues.

What the process of tallying the levels of concern achieved, however, was to provide a basis for developing a positive strategy. Beginning with concern allows a start to be made on what the staff (or the staff and parents) have in common, rather than focussing on potential differences.

Early discussions of boys' educational problems foundered on the number of factors to be

considered, and the seemingly impossible task of changing human nature, society and culture. Now, after numbers of schools have begun grappling with the problem, the complexity and the large array of factors remain, but the momentum for tackling boys' schooling is building, and it is possible to identify central issues which need to be addressed in the process.

STEP 2 Presenting information to develop a broad framework for considering boys' needs

The style of presenting information to teachers will differ slightly from that used in parent discussions, but there are enough similarities to usefully consider these two together.

HOW ARE BOYS DOING?

The graphs at the end of this manual (Appendix 1) have been shown to hundreds of audiences from a range of backgrounds (see Appendix 2). In each case the response has been similar. Whether medically trained professionals, parents, blue collar workers or teachers, the overall effect is one of concern bordering on alarm or even depression (a frequently heard comment by men attending is "I felt alright before I came in here").

It is not that any one of these figures is particularly startling (although some of the figures for sports injuries and road traffic accidents will be surprising). The effectiveness of presenting these graphs seems to rely on the cumulative effect of a number of pieces of information. While the general high levels of injury for example will be widely known, the size of the differences and the uniformly poor outcomes across such a wide range of indicators will be unfamiliar to most audiences. This is true for lay and professional audiences. Although health workers will know certain areas in great detail, being part of the health system is no guarantee of familiarity with the total picture for males. At a recent Men's Health seminar for general practitioners, the chief medical officer of a large hospital was in the audience. After the first part of the presentation where the graphs were shown, his pager called him away. Before exiting he turned to the person beside him and whispered "I didn't know the figures were as bad as that."

The main points to stress in presenting this information are:

1. These figures are not a new discovery.

The figures that the graphs are based on come from very conservative and respectable bodies such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics or the Federal Office of Road Safety. They are published every year and all major libraries have a set of the figures. The adolescent outcomes were compiled as part of a NSW Health Department funded study using figures from the main teaching hospital in Newcastle and the literacy outcomes were reported in by the Australian Council for Educational Research, our peak educational research body. So the figures themselves are neither controversial, nor a new discovery.

2. The causes of death and injury revealed in these graphs are not a new mysterious disease.

The things that are killing boys and young men are the well known causes: road traffic

crashes, risk taking, drowning and suicide. There is no new discovery that will inoculate boys against risk taking. We are faced with a social problem with outcomes which can be measured in very concrete terms.

3. This affects all of us

The effect on the community of so many young males wasting their own and others lives is devastating.

4. We need a different approach

What the figures suggest is that while we have devoted plenty of resources to male health and social problems (just think of the dollars we have devoted to the "male" problems of drink driving, heart disease, criminal behaviour, lung cancer and industrial accidents), we have obviously been missing something. That "something" is male identity. In each area where males predominate in mortality figures, we are now discovering that "being a man" has something to do with it. The implication is that "more of the same" will not suffice. We need to rethink our services, such as schools, to take male identity into account.

5. Education issues for boys are connected to other areas of their lives

While schools have always held the welfare of students to be an important priority, schools' public evaluation has most often been in terms of labour market outcomes. "Do our students get decent jobs and become productive members of the society?" has been the fundamental question. For boys, if this question is interpreted too narrowly, then the development of an effective strategy will be impeded. Health outcomes are a useful way to broaden the discussion of boys issues for two reasons. Health statistics, particularly mortality rates, mobilise concern among teachers and parents because they are clearly understood and draw on one of our core values - the sanctity of human life. Highlighting health and social outcomes for boys and men puts the call for "getting a job" into perspective. Health outcomes make clear the overlap between the concerns of health workers, teachers, welfare workers and parents. (See Overheads A and B in the appendices)

The health - education connection

The following case study, a brief, factual account of one young man's life, has been documented as part of the Men's Health Project at The University of Newcastle. This case study has been effective in conveying to parents and teachers the interconnectedness of male identity, learning and good health. It underlines our shared responsibility for the welfare of men and boys.

GREG'S STORY

"Greg", (not his real name) is a 29 year old, single male. He has End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD-also known as Chronic Renal Failure: CRF), requiring thrice weekly haemodialysis for survival. Greg was diagnosed with nephritis (kidney disease), of unknown origin, at the age of 17. Since then, he has had yearly "check-ups", which showed gradual decline in renal function but presented no real effect on his lifestyle.

In his own words, Greg had always "lived life to the fullest". He believed that if you really wanted something out of life, it was "yours for the taking, if you were prepared to work for it".

Greg was always very involved with sport. Up to only 5 months ago he was still playing and coaching in rugby union and league; both at adult level and with school children. Along with his sporting friends he was also very socially active, enjoying "a good time and a good drink with friends". Greg would occasionally "binge" drink, though did not drink all the time.

Greg comes from a close family, consisting of his parents, a sister and himself. His father owns and runs a business, where Greg was employed as a type of "assistant manager". Due to his present medical and dialysis commitments, he is presently unable to continue working. Greg had obtained his HSC. and was studying business management part-time at college. His family was then, and is still very supportive.

For 18 months Greg lived in a de facto relationship with a woman with 2 children. This relationship ended on poor terms about 4/5 months ago, just after he began requiring haemodialysis. Prior to the last 12 months, Greg said he had always experienced "good" physical health, except perhaps for occasional serial headaches some 2 years ago, which were diagnosed as being caused by excessively high blood pressure. As well, Greg has difficulties achieving and maintaining adequate sleep.

X-rays show Greg has a slightly enlarged heart considered to be as a consequence of years of extremely elevated and relatively uncontrollable blood pressure, which was

itself secondary to his nephritis. As a child, Greg was diagnosed with asthma. Despite this Greg was a smoker of a packet of cigarettes every 2 days, up until 5 weeks ago.

Recently Greg has experienced waning appetite, with resulting decline in body weight (from 70 kg down to 58 kg in 5 months). He says that recently he has experienced intermittent bouts of diarrhoea, and that he often feels "gassy" following haemodialysis treatment. A little over 12 months previously, Greg had also had a duodenal ulcer diagnosed. However, this settled itself in a short period of time with conservative treatment. Greg is concerned that under the present circumstances this may "flare up" again, either as a consequence of his renal failure or as a result of his reactions to increased stressors.

For some time Greg has experienced intermittent swelling of his left knee, as a result of previous sporting injuries. He realises that he now has to contend with degenerative bone disease secondary to CRF. Greg has very dry skin (also secondary to CRF), though he has no rashes. He does, however find that he bruises very easily.

On interview day Greg was dressed in clean but slightly shabby old clothes. He was not clean shaven and his hair was unkempt and he walked and stood with a slight stoop. Generally he did not appear to take much time or pride in his appearance.

Eight months ago, Greg had a small operation on his left arm to connect an artery to a vein (a shunt) formed in his left arm, as access for haemodialysis. Hhowever, due to his continuing to play contact sports (contrary to previous advice), he injured his left arm and the shunt was damaged. In the three months since then Greg has had four central venous lines inserted either in his chest or neck. The access lines in his neck, in particular, are very visible, often very uncomfortable and without question restrict his general activities and alter his appearance.

Despite his admission that his family and close friends remain absolutely accepting and supportive of him, Greg states he feels inadequate and different when out in public and amongst acquaintances. He especially attributes these feelings due to his alteration in appearance (both his weight loss and highly visible access line). He readily admits that previously he took great pride in his appearance and physique.

Greg remains bitter about the break-up with his de facto. He feels she deserted him when he needed her support, but previously when she had a period of illness, he was supportive of her and her children. He states that she told him that "she no longer found him attractive as a man", which he says devastated him. He began drinking heavily and on one occasion went to her home where he smashed up the house and hit her. Later, these actions led him to feeling even worse about himself, especially as they sealed the end of the relationship. He states he still misses her and the children. She now actively avoids him.

Greg states that he has never experienced any suicidal tendencies, though he says he has

had some "very black moods" some days. He says he feels he has lost so much, in such a short period of time - his job (and resultant financial security), his previous lifestyle ("loss of normality"), his sport, his girlfriend and de facto family, and the freedom to travel (consequently now being unable to travel overseas as he had earlier planned). As well, he has had dramatic alteration in physical appearance.

In talking with Greg, his emotions appear to fluctuate from despair, to anger, to sadness (and occasionally, tentative hope). Greg says that he feels dispirited in that there does not appear any appropriate place or person to vent his anger and frustration on, over his losses. He says that he had no real idea how his renal failure and resultant continuing medical treatment would affect his life. He feels he can't really "blame" anyone, but that he feels the clinical environment necessary for his treatment is "dehumanising". At his own insistence, Greg has sought the assistance of a psychiatrist, who immediately prescribed him an antidepressant.

Prepared by Andrew Smart for the Men's Health Project, University of Newcastle

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Boys' lives are not divided neatly into health, education, social learning and so on. The links between health outcomes, boys' attitudes to school and particular markers such as literacy have been easily grasped by professional and lay audiences alike.

The section on benchmarking is designed to be used after the discussion on boys and men's health status to translate concern into realistic targets which can be tracked as the school takes steps to improve boys' outcomes.

STEP 3 Benchmarking

Benchmarking, setting measurable goals, is an important part of developing boys' education strategies because it allows schools to do three things. First, it allows school staff to clarify and prioritise their concerns. This is important for staff morale, because whole school approaches are either implied or are directly required for most boys' issues Second, it allows the school to measure what they are achieving when they introduce new programs. Third, it allows schools to communicate effectively with the parents about their concerns, to define areas to be negotiated with parents and boys, and to demonstrate to parents and staff that the new initiatives are having an effect.

Benchmarking involves both measurement and thoughtful interrogation. The measurement side can be achieved, in the first instance, where data is already collected by the school. For example schools may already record academic performance, numbers of detentions, suspensions, prizes and awards, separately for boys and girls.

One school counsellor serving two primary schools, made this table in order to justify a program for boys:

Public School No 1

1996 - 1997	Reading Recovery Program	5 boys	2 girls
1997	STLD	3 boys	1 girl
1997	Counsellor referrals	7 boys	2 girls
1995- 1997	Discipline problems Including bullying, fighting	Boys account for all	
1997	Academic awards	Dominated by girls	

Public School No 2

1996 - 1997	Reading Recovery Program	6 boys	2 girls
1997	STLD	12 boys	4 girls
1997	Counsellor referrals	8 boys	1 girl
1995 - 1997	Discipline problems Including bullying, fighting	Boys account for all	
1997	Academic awards	Dominated by girls	

A nearby high school noticed the same problem, but in a slightly different set of outcomes.

High School No 1

HSC RESULTS

1994	
TER Above 50	14 Boys
	21 Girls
1995	
TER Above 50	10 Boys
	16 Girls
1996	
TER Above 50	5 Boys
	11 Girls
TER Above 40	7 Boys
	18 Girls

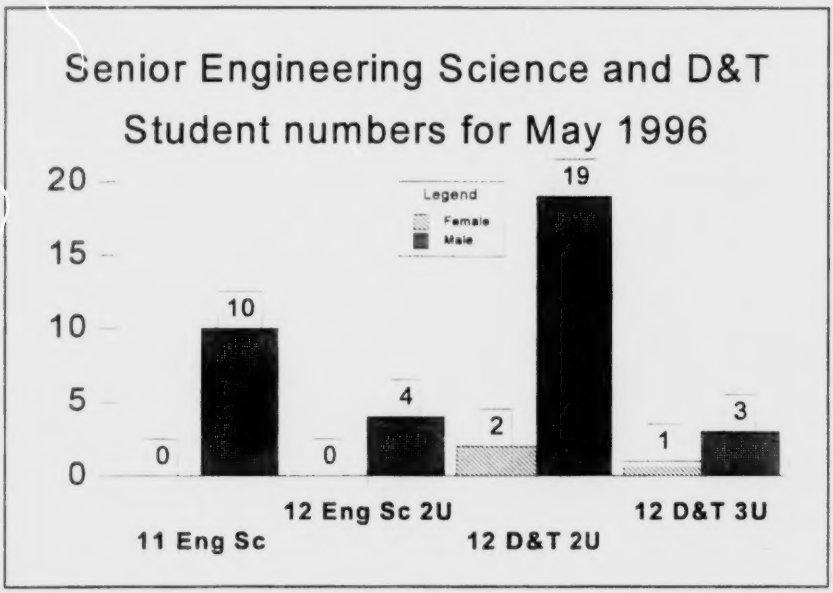
Reasons for Suspensions (Term 2 1997)

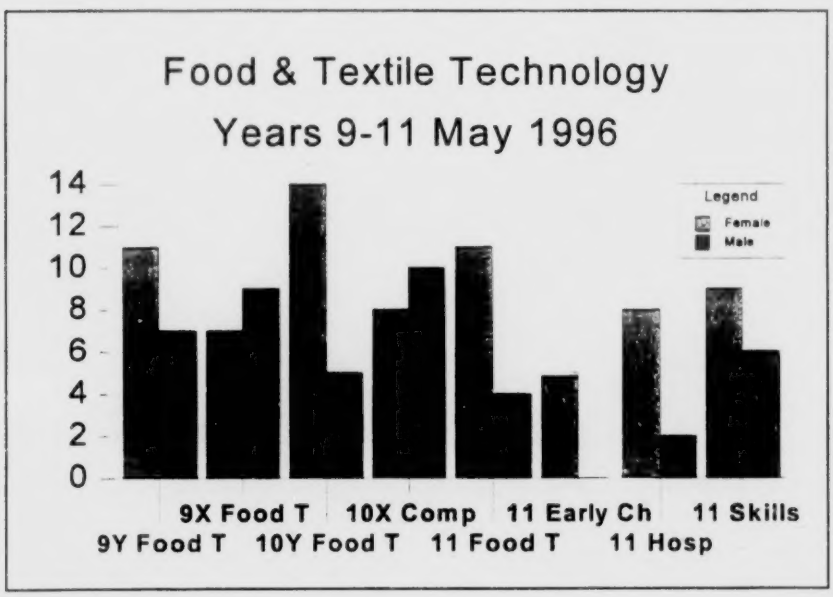
* Non Violent Behaviour	-	4 Boys for every Girl
* Violence	-	3 Boys for every Girl
* Overall Suspensions Term 2 1997:-	-	23 Boys to14 Girls

This evidence was sufficient, in both the primary and high schools, to justify the introduction of a boys' program. However for benchmarking, a broader set of markers would both provide a more effective evaluation tool and more accurately suggest the range of concerns held by the teachers about the boys.

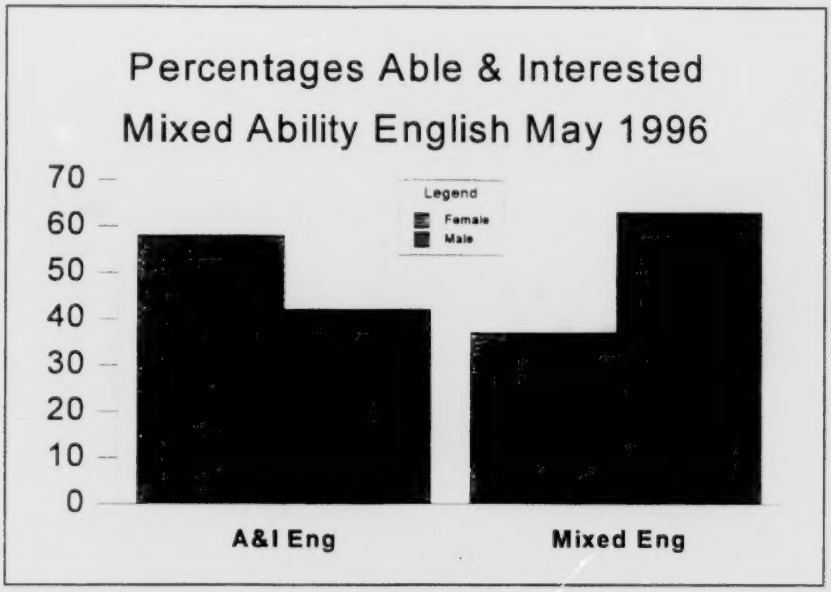
High School No 2

At a high school in another region, the teacher co-ordinating Gender Equity collated figures from the school to provide a graphic account of boys' subject choice:





He also documented achievement in class groupings by noting male female ratios within English :



High School No 3

Another individual effort, this time by a high school careers adviser, produced an impressive 20 page report on boys' motivation and achievement. In the report evidence was derived from a variety of sources to support a school focus on boys. The figures and comments after each table are from this report.

High School No 3

Student representative Council (SRC)

	1994	1995
Males	8	8
Females	12	10

Table 1

Although more girls participate in the SRC males contribute equally to all the decision making processes.

In the recently formed History Club there are four boys and four girls who give up part of their lunch break to be involved in this activity.

Peer Support Program

	1994	1995	1996
Males	4	8	4
Females	21	19	21

Table 2

Peer support numbers are dominated by girls who show leadership qualities by virtue of their maturity. Interestingly, the 4 males and 21 females' positions, seeking participation in the 1996, peer support program, were whittled down from 8 male and 32 female applications received. Therefore the volunteer ratio is ***4:1****.*

Prefects

	1994	1995	1996
Captain/s	Male	Female	Male & Female
Vice Captain	Male	Female	
Male	10	3	4
Female	11	18	12

Table 3

- *Certainly, since the 1993/4 prefects were inducted participation levels for boys has significantly dropped with girls out numbering boys by a ratio of 4:1*
- *In 1994 boys demonstrated absolute leadership, were effective and well supported.*
- *In 1995 boys demonstrated no initiative and were mainly concerned with what their peers would think.*
- *The 1995/6 boys have already shown considerable initiative and leadership qualities, but this is still early days.*

Debating

	92	93	94	95
M	3	0	3	2
F	8	8	6	11

Table 4

- *No Year 11 & 12 team for debating during the 95/96 Year - lack of interest.*
- *However, those boys who did participate showed good leadership qualities and*

initiative, and resisted peer pressure not to continue.

Public Speaking

	92	93	94	95
M	1	1	1	1
F	3	3	3	3

Table 5

There are three times as many girls who venture into the public speaking arena at High School No 3 than boys. This anti-achievement syndrome where it's cool to be the fool but not cool to be smart stops many boys from breaking away from the security of their peers. Lack of maturity, social skill, communication skills and a general lack of confidence are all contributing factors.

School Musical

1) *1992 Sheelock Holmes*

2) *1993 Smithy*

3) *1995 How the West was Warped*

Drama Cast

	92	93	95
M	24	17	19
F	26	29	35

Table 6

Music & Production Crew

	92	93	95
M	6	17	9
F	9	20	24

Table 7

Teacher A, the production manager believes that there needs to be a culture that boys are involved with, it's OK to be in the production, it is worthwhile, has value, and boys are willing to persevere to be part of the cast. The school "..needs to build up a tradition of participation that is integral to the school and the school is proud of its involvement. If the production is just something that is done as icing on the cake, boys will not participate in large numbers. They want to feel that they are not going to be looked upon as something

strange".

Teacher A said that it was extremely difficult to motivate the cast this year and keep them on task. Ironically, the motivation to participate came at the end of the musical: the thrill of the applause and to be part of a worthwhile production.

"Previous productions, had a traditional core of boys who had been involved in town productions and knew what it was all about - when they left there was a vacuum of commitment."

Teacher A also commented "boys don't have a focus - shifting sand. The traditional roles of males are being challenged and they don't know how to be male. They see girls out-stripping them academically with girls preferring the linguistic style learning in our school". He honestly believes tha,t for all their bravado, boys are more fragile than girls and must be nurtured more.

Duke of Edinburgh Award

1995	GOLD AWARD	9M	9F
1994	SILVER AWARD	11M	14F

Table 8

In 1995 there were equal numbers who received their gold awards. But traditionally for some unexplained reason more girls drop-out of the program than boys. For example, five girls did not continue from silver to gold. In comparison only two boys discontinued the program. Perhaps girls consider academic study more important, and are not prepared to give up the necessary time to complete the higher award. On the other hand, more boys value the experience and persevere to the end.

1995 Bronze Award

STARTED PROGRAM	LIKELY TO ACHIEVE AWARD
12M	9M
27F	18F

Table 9

The unexplained trend above still exists in the junior school, with one third of the girls falling by the way-side compared to only a quarter of the boys. Nevertheless, girls' initial participation rates are still more than double the boys.

Teacher B says that the girls are the workers and initiators, although some males do stand out as very good leaders, but the boys that are there, are there because they want to be

involved.

Interestingly the 1995 Bronze group is not the usual sports stars who generally participate.

Music

1995 SCHOOL BAND			
	Senior	Junior	Total
Male	10	8	18
Female	16	3	19
Total Band Numbers			37

Table 10

The fairly even distribution of males and females participating in the school band, contrasts with the choral singing groups that are exclusively female. This strong attraction to girls has only once been broken by two boys dropping by to join the girls sing. However, they did not venture back for more of the same after their initial investigation.

Teacher C says students "do get attitude from some of their peers, mostly comments from knockers who don't participate. All students that persevere do so because they truly love music". Furthermore she believes that the profile of how music is perceived in the school needs to be raised. The musical culture of the school must build-up esteem in which it is valued as an integral part of school life.

Teacher C says "it is of interest to note that nearly all band members, regardless of sex, are all 'A' stream students with the exception of the odd few who do persist. Success revolves around parent interest, do they care whether they practise or not. If they don't care (parents) students do not progress.

At times boys in the band do show outbursts of high spirits (generally junior members), yet they willingly offer to help with lifting and have a genuine consideration of others."

Finally, she does not see age as a barrier to band participation or social interaction, as you would see in the playground.

These examples suggest the range of possible benchmarks. They also indicate the importance of yearly fluctuations and the effect of cohorts on behaviour. The evidence that in some areas boys are ahead and the identification of programs where girls are dropping out and losing interest are also important to note. This evidence does not "disprove" the need to look at boys. Boys and girls have needs in different areas. Rather than be drawn into a competition to see "who is worst off", the use of evidence such as that collected at

High School No 3, is to focus the schools' attention on problem areas which affect boys. The fact that there is another set of problem areas for girls does not diminish the need to look at boys.

The teachers' comments also indicate their multifaceted understanding of boys' motivation and the range of influences impinging on boys. One factor to consider in advancing the focus on boys is the effort of teachers themselves. If we examine participation in debating or in drama or extra curricular activities there might well be a respectable number of boys directly involved. However staff might have had to work very hard to get boys involved. In the school drama production, for example, teachers might have needed to go out of their way to find a production that they thought boys would find acceptable, they might have had to speak to the boys several times and spend a lot of staff time and energy ensuring that the boys remained engaged. This is important to identify since staff in all schools already have plenty of work to do. Boys' strategies that are seen as an add-on and creating more work for staff can seem to be simply an added burden A more appealing approach is to document the effort already expended on boys and then to suggest redirecting the energy into a more productive strategy.

This is an important caveat for benchmarking. The figures are necessary, but must be used with thoughtful interrogation. While boys have been the focus of school policies for some years, in a sense, we know little about boys. Most importantly, we know very little about the transition process taking boys into manhood. This connection, between boys' idea of what is appropriate behaviour for boys, and their school and social outcomes, is one which teachers and parents everywhere recognise as important. At High School No 2 , where the teacher responsible for Gender Equity began documenting boys' choices, one prompt for this work was the graffiti left on a desk during an HSC exam

Robert M was here
doing his HSC
27/10/95
English - it was hard
- Don't touch drugs
- Be a girl
- Study hard
- Leave in year 10

What we are just beginning to recognise, for a number of reasons, is the school's important role in shaping boys' notions of "being a man ".

A list of possible benchmarks

A comprehensive list of the factors which could be measured and tracked as part of a boys' strategy is provided in **Appendix 3**. The list was compiled during a workshop with 40 welfare co-ordinators from schools in one region. The list was subsequently reviewed and added to by a number of other teachers. The list has been found useful in providing staff with a thinking tool for developing boys' strategies.

Choosing a strategy

As will be clear from the discussion up to this point, the idea that one program or package would effectively address boys' needs is fanciful. What is also evident from the work that schools have already undertaken in this area, is that many initiatives which are planned as part of a boys' strategy may target all students in a school or not be explicitly named a "Boys' Initiative".

However, designated boys' programs have been introduced by some schools and boy-specific teaching programs and kits have been developed. Schools are referred to: **Boys in Schools: addressing the real issues, behaviour, values and relationships**, edited by Rollo Browne and Richard Fletcher, published by Finch 1995, and to the recently released **Boys in Schools Bulletin**. The book contains descriptions of specific programs in bullying and relationships, gives examples of teaching strategies in English and drama, describes whole school approaches to involving boys and dealing with issues of male identity and homophobia. Included in the first issue of the **Boys in Schools Bulletin** are brief accounts of new teaching arrangements for Year 7 & 8 boys and behaviour management for younger primary boys. Readers are referred to these documents for further information. Both are available from **The Men and Boys Project**. Ordering details can be found at the end of this manual.

STEP 4 Involving the Parents (Particularly the Dads)

Of course parents are invited to contribute to school policy and are considered to be partners in the education process. But schools have varied widely in the way they have gone about involving parents. One feature of parent involvement, which is evident in all regions, is the way mothers rather than fathers are involved in school activities. Mothers predominate in volunteer work in the canteen, on committees such as the Parents and Citizens or Parents and Friends, making costumes, helping in the office, and in performing the myriad of other unpaid work around the school. For fathers, the picture is different. Fathers have traditionally been involved in physical activities, construction, clearing up, helping with sports events and with positions of responsibility such as president, school board or council member.

The first task for many schools is to get the fathers to attend a discussion of their boys' progress. One avenue for attracting fathers is to emphasise that fathers particularly are requested to attend a specific discussion about boys, for the sake of the boys. Two examples of publicity directed to parents which resulted in a positive response are reproduced on the next pages.

It is worth noting that the school meeting at Oberon was held, not at the school but in an RSL Club, a place more familiar to many men, and more comfortable, than any school hall. The meeting was also sponsored by a number of community groups which would be recognised as men's groups in the sense of having male members and a "male style". Inviting such groups to sponsor the meeting is a way of saying to the community and the parents that improving boys' education is not a technical issue of how to teach boys to write essays or to solve quadratic equations. Boys' education is a community responsibility and the community, particularly men, have an important role to play.

Why focus on the dads?

Since the question of boys' education is not a narrow technical one, but a broad collection of issues including male identity, the social context of boys' learning is the male community. The most immediate link to influencing boys are the male teachers, male peers, and male family members. It is therefore essential to invite the fathers (including de facto fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, etc.) to be a part of the fresh approach to boys.

There is not the space in this manual to argue the general case that we have placed too much emphasis on media representations of males and too little emphasis on men who have a connection with boys. Nor is there room to detail the evidence that, in education circles, we have vastly overestimated the influence of the peer group relative to that of fathers and mothers. While media influences and peer group influences are important factors, the most

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Director of the
Men's Health Project, Family Action Centre
University of Newcastle

and invites you and your family members to participate in a

PUBLIC FORUM

concerning
Men's and Boys' Health
Keeping Boys Alive, Keeping Men Well

Oberon RSL Club Function Room
Monday 24th February 7:30-9:30pm

Issues to be discussed include: men's health, boys' health, boys' education, underachieving boys, father/son relationships, male/female relationships, peer culture, self-esteem, communication and community health.

Mr Fletcher's appearance in Oberon is sponsored by the following community-minded organisations:

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Oberon RSL Sub-Branch **The Rotary Club of Oberon**
The Lions Club of Oberon

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Richard Fletcher *is one of Australia's foremost advocates for mens health and boys education, and is the Director of the* ***Men and Boys Project*** *at the Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle. He is also the co-editor of* ***'Boys in Schools'*** *a book addressing the current situation for boys today.*

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'BOYS IN SCHOOL'

A talk for all those interested in our boys' future.

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Worrigee House, Worigee Road, Worrigee (East of Nowra)
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obvious lack in schools' approach to boys to date, has been the absence of fathers in the learning situations of the boys.

There are schools where fathers have been invited to participate. These experiences are documented in the publication **Getting Dads Involved in Schools**. The details are supplied at the end of this manual. A part of this publication offers suggestions in the vexed area of single mothers, their sons and schools. While family make-up is coming to be recognised as an important factor in school success, schools' understanding in the area of boys' needs for male role models is still in its infancy. In the appendices, Australian Bureau of Statistics figures are supplied on the numbers of teenage boys living with a male parent (**Appendix 4**) . This data is included to give some perspective to the issue since, although the needs of boys in single parent families are significant, staff room discussion sometimes implies that boys of single parents are the only group in difficulty. Too much emphasis on this group will miss the need for all boys to be engaged, with older males, in promoting a better school.

If we want men to get involved, we will have to do things differently. This means going after men, but it also means valuing men, fathers, for what they might contribute. It may seem an obvious point but if we want fathers involved then it would be a good idea to let fathers know that they are appreciated and valued. Not that schools have denigrated fathers, but because the normal school routine does not rely on fathers to interact with the students, fathers are easily left out of the picture.

Being positive about fathers is part of many schools' approach to their community. Schools promote the image of fathers by encouraging their pupils to express their feelings for their fathers through competitions, drawing suggestions and story writing tasks such as *What I Like About My Dad*. Students are quite capable of finding things to like about their fathers. The danger in relying on this approach, however, is that the picture of fathering is too simple.

Appreciating fathers is not the same as saying "Dads are Great!" or organising a card for Father's Day once a year. Appreciating fathers must start from a positive view of the fathers in the community, but it entails actively encouraging fathers to be involved with their own children's schooling and with other students at the school. One hesitation many schools have in pursuing a father-friendly policy is the possible negative effect on children without fathers. While it is appropriate not to assume that all households have two parents, other male guardians, grandparents, uncles, etc. can be invited too. Broadening the notion of fathers to include other responsible men provides a way to engage dads without disadvantaging single parent (usually a mother) families. It should also be recognised that fathers need not be restricted to interaction with their own children. Indeed, it is the other children in the school who are most likely to benefit from fathers taking part in school activities.

There is no one correct way to engage fathers. However, one effective method which has been found useful in several parts of Australia is to recruit fathers through emphasising the

role of adult men in raising boys.

There is a general understanding in the community that boys look up to older boys and men, and learn from them. Fathers in the community can be appealed to (valued) through their concern for their own sons and for boys in the community. This is not an appeal to a narrow chauvinistic sentiment but an appeal which is based on the idea that fathers care about what happens to their sons. Of course, fathers also care what happens to their daughters, but fathers feel a particular responsibility to the next generation of men. This approach links desirable outcomes for boys with the involvement of fathers.

Even in locations with small populations, over 100 parents have frequently been attending. The mothers and fathers have brought their own concerns about how well their sons are doing and had a chance to hear information about what is concerning others around Australia about boys.

One outcome of these meetings is a shared determination between the parents and the school to improve boys' educational and social outcomes. Another outcome of these meetings is that a change in the way fathers see being involved in the school. Getting "in there" becomes regarded as a more masculine activity, an important part of fathering, rather than something that women usually do.

Using benchmarking with parents

The approach being suggested here is to use the benchmarking process to engage the parents in a broad discussion of boys' needs and to negotiate a set of benchmarks which can be supported by the parents.

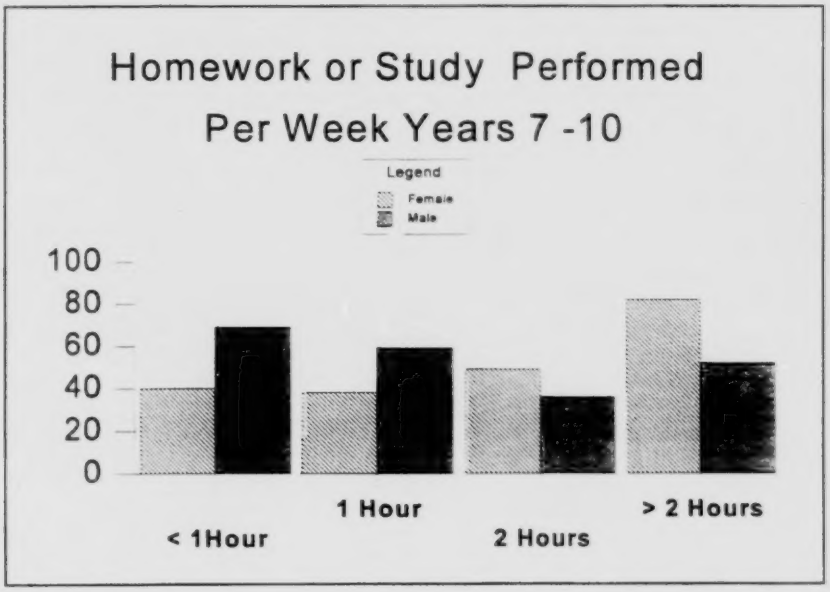
Benchmarking helps clarify this discussion because it points to a pattern in the boys behaviour. The discussion with parents need not be conducted about the minutia of particular subjects or behaviours. To have a detailed discussion about why a particular group of boys should learn Indonesian or why boys do not want to be representatives on the school council is probably not productive. Instead, the debate can gather support from the community by demonstrating that there is an across-the-board lack of achievement by boys. This allows agreement on a general concern where many points of agreement are possible between teachers, parents, and the wider community.

STEP 5 Asking the Boys

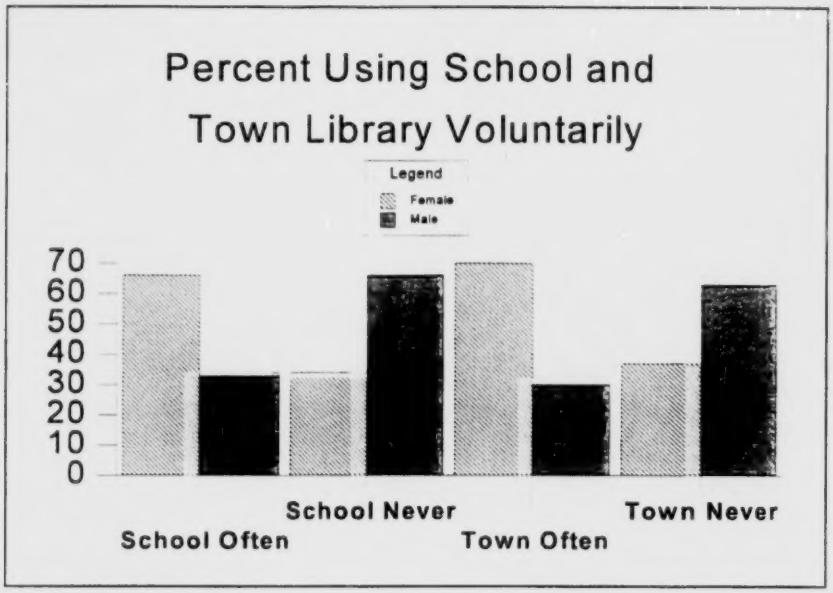
This is not as obvious as it sounds. As described in the earlier section on health, one of the key insights of the new approach to men and boys is the recognition that we, the service providers, do not know what men think, about in a whole range of important areas.

For scientifically literate communities such as schools, a survey will present itself as a logical way to investigate the boys' views.

At High School No 2, where the results of an investigation into subject choice (from school records) were described earlier, a survey of the students revealed evidence of the extent of difference between male and female use in their approach to study.



And in their use of the library facilties in their own time



The same survey contained questions on attitudes to education. Similar proportions ticked "important" or "employment" but 46 boys compared to 28 girls ticked "torture".

Surveys have also been used in schools to gather support for change from students and teachers. At Canterbury Boys High School in the late 1980s, the problems could only be described as critical:

> *The students' behaviour in the playground was a serious problem. A regular activity was fruit fights. Students would bring oranges, lemons, tomatoes etc. to school and gangs of students would pelt each other with the fruit. One student almost lost the sight of an eye after being hit with a lemon.*
>
> *Interesting responses to the situation were observed in the behaviour of the staff. In one instance, a History teacher donned a motor cycle helmet before going out to playground duty. He was afraid, quite seriously, of being hit and refused to step outside without protection.*
>
> *Sometimes the violence was not so overt. A 'pack' mentality existed amongst the students. Groups of them - eight or ten in number - would sidle up to staff members and intimidate them by their physical proximity. Female members of staff were constantly targeted by the students for this type of treatment. The anonymity of being in a large group made it possible for students to get away with making offensive remarks which humiliated and intimidated many teachers.*

Vandalism was rife. Both the school's and teachers' property were targeted. Teachers' cars were favourite objects of attention: they were set on fire, had windows smashed, were broken into, scratched, written on and, of course, had badges removed. Some examples of vandalism displayed creativity by students. One teacher had his car's exhaust pipe stuffed with nails, scrap metal and potatoes ... the explosion was impressive.

Surveys of students revealed that:

- *Seventy-five percent of students surveyed found the existing system to be inconsistent and unfair.*
- *Seventy-five percent said that the school should run courses which improved self-discipline.*
- *Eighty percent believed that a fair way to resolve problems was for students to work it out with their class teacher, yet eighty-three percent reported that they had never done this.*

The survey results encouraged staff in their development of a new approach to discipline, one based on the boys themselves taking responsibility for formulating a new set of school rules. To formulate the rules, about seventy percent of the boys were surveyed. After a lengthy consultation process the staff voted to accept the new rules developed by the boys. Over five years, the new discipline system turned the school atmosphere around to one where a teacher from a neighbouring school commented after a visit:

Walking around the school (CBHS) is like walking through a library. Everyone is quiet and working.

The beauty of surveys is that they allow boys to identify their own needs, (ignoring the possible bias in designing the survey) and so can begin a shift from the usual "I have to do this because the teacher wants me to", to a context of boys taking responsibility for the good tone of the school.

The drawback with surveys is that they are rely on predetermined categories and so are poor tools for discovering new needs, and they provide limited opportunity for discussion, a key factor in developing boys' understanding.

A more direct method of engaging boys in describing their own needs has been evolved through the work of family planning educators working specifically in the areas of sexuality and masculinity. Rollo Browne describes his approach to "revealing the need for change" as follows:

The first step is for the boys to brainstorm. I ask them to list the things they value in their peers and those they find difficult and would like to change: "What do you

really like about the way your mates behave?" and "What really gets you about the way your mates sometimes behave?".

Looking at these two lists, we discover that many of the things boys value are also linked to those they'd like to change. For example, someone's sense of humour may be valued, but not the put-downs that come with it.

The list of behaviours that boys want to change varies from group to group. They might want to do away with such things as: big-noting themselves, putting others down, 'dropping you' suddenly, stealing, crying and talking behind your back.

The aim is to compile a list of simple phrases or slogans - our value statements - with which we can then all agree or disagree. By the end of the strategy the boys will make a judgement about each statement in terms of whether it applies to themselves. "Is this something you believe to be true? Is this something you live by?".

A list of messages for put-downs might be:

I'm better than you.
It's not OK to make mistakes.
Power means making you look or feel stupid.
My image is more important than your feelings.
Your feelings don't count.
Being different is not acceptable.

Using the list of messages, I get the boys to vote on each value statement indicating whether they agree, disagree or are unsure. Once the group has voted I extend discussion by using a range of questions such as: "Is this something you believe about yourself?", "Is this belief going to help you in your relationships?". In relation to slogans such as "Power equals strength" or "Talk is weak", I would ask, "Can you think of anyone who is powerful without being strong?". (Some responses have been Fred Hollows, Mother Teresa, Kerry Packer, Carmen Lawrence and, for some, their mum.) Other questions might be, "What other ways are there of being powerful?" or "When is talking really powerful rather than weak?". Essentially I am challenging the value statements listed.

By the time we have been through the list, the group finds that we have disagreed with a majority (sixty-five to ninety-five percent) of these statements. In pointing this out to the group I might ask various questions: "Why do you think we behave in ways that give messages we don't actually agree with? Doesn't this suggest we act in ways that are not the real us - that there is a lot of pretending involved in being male? Is that true? Is that your experience? Does everybody have to put on an act? What is so important to us that we have to put on an act for it? How does it feel to know you aren't being honest about who you are - that nobody is being honest about who they are?".

The boys nod and smile as everyone realises they are playing the same game of pretence. Now the group is aware of the dissonance that goes along with projecting an image of masculinity.

A full description of this work (and of the Caterbury Boys High School transformation referred to above) is given in **Boys in Schools: addressing the real issues, behaviour, values and relationships**, edited by Rollo Browne and Richard Fletcher, Finch 1995.

Challenging boys' values as described here is an important first step in shifting the school culture which has not served boys well and which boys find themselves complying with. The skills demonstrated by the presenter, however, are sometimes seen as too difficult to acquire in that they rely on use of dramatic enactments and structured engagment with boys comments. There is some truth to this view. The presenter in this case, Rollo Browne, is an experienced teacher, has had some years training in group work and psychodrama and extensive experience addressing sexuality issues with boys.

Given the disastrous situation that many boys find themselves in, acquiring such skills can no longer be thought of as irrelevant to good teaching. But the focus should not be on an isolated skill ignoring the context of the activity. The context of the school as a whole needs to be considered. As schools take on the issue of boys' attitudes to themselves, and to each other, the level of skills required to engender reflective conversations with boys changes because the activity of having boys reflect on their actions becomes a part of normal school activity. The school atmosphere, in turn, is influenced by (and influences) the reflection taking place in the community. The process of change in school culture is slow and attention needs to be given to the most appropriate intervention points.

Having boys reflect on their needs, as a normal part of school activity, is being accomplished in a number of schools. Using a pack of photographs, boys are being encouraged to identify their needs and discuss their ideas of being a man.

The task of asking the boys can be accomplished using any combination of the above methods. However, the use of photographs is described here in detail since, in the experience of recent work with schools, this method provides a way for schools who are beginning to develop an explicit boys' education strategy to start working with the boys to improve the social environment of the school.

Using the PHOTOPAK

The Photopak consists of 45 large (A4) black and white photographs of men and boys. The photos are selected to be provocative. They include images of men in a variety of occupations, men in nurturing and aggressive roles, men and boys taking risks, being reflective and displaying a variety of emotions.

While the photographs are useful for exploring a variety of male identity issues, they have a specific role in helping schools to identify boys' needs. The exercises described below have been used in public and private, urban and rural schools to help to engage the boys in improving the quality of the school. Most groups did not work their way through the four topics (school teachers and psychologists will recognise the categories of basic needs proposed by William Glasser in this outline). Discussions typically diverted down myriad interesting paths. But at the end of one period discussing these issues, teachers had identified a list of improvements to the school suggested by the boys. Teachers in many cases were also heartened or even astounded at the responses given by the boys.

The central question to offer boys is this: "How do the boys in the school get their needs met at present and what improvements would they suggest to have a better school?"

In summary, the group exercise has six parts.

1. Purpose
2. Safety
3. Introductory exercises
4. Warm up
5. Getting needs met
6. Thank you and conclusion

1. PURPOSE

Suggested introductory remarks could be along these lines:

> *What are we here for? Well we know that kids in schools can see a lot of things that they don't like all that much. Some kids more than others and some schools more than others but generally we know that things could be better. We've decided to try and make things better in this school. We are going to try and make some changes. Would you like to see some changes around here?*
>
> *Well this talk we're starting now is for us to decide what sort of changes would suit this group. We are going to use this pile of photos here to figure out what changes would suit this group. But first just to get the group going properly lets agree on how we do this talking bit.*

2. SAFETY

Since the object of using the photos is to get boys ideas out for discussion, it is important to take all reasonable steps to make it safe for them to talk openly. One important factor is whether the group of participants can be seen or over heard by others. Running a group discussion in a Library for example where other students or young people are passing by will raise the self consciousness of the group members and reduce their chances of talking honestly. Having the group in a separate space with no interruptions is ideal and will give the best chance for comments to be honest.

Experience with groups of boys shows that they understand confidentiality and can keep an agreement. By confidentiality here is meant: not talking about what individuals have said, naming individuals or attributing comments to them outside of the group. It does seem important to state the confidentiality of agreement to the group and to ask each boy to indicate his agreement specifically. For example, instead of asking "So the agreement is, that what we say here stays in the group, is that ok?" and waiting for someone in the group to object and then moving on, it seems preferable to ask each person individually "Is that ok Ben" or "is that ok Tony, does that sound right, Tony?" and so on. So that each boy makes a commitment to the process.

Groups of three or four can be successful but sometimes we are talking about an unfamiliar topic, and a small group will feel too intense and make it awkward to talk. Groups over ten have the opposite problem. Because only one person can really talk at a time, some might feel they have not been listened to, and switch off.

If the aim of the group is to give the participants a chance to discuss and explore their ideas, then recording is probably not essential. But as is suggested elsewhere in this manual, the discussion can usefully be seen as part of an ongoing process of engaging the boys in the running of the school and encouraging the boys to take responsibility of what is happening around them. In this case, recording the boys comments is important in two areas. For boys to have input into the life of the school they need to be able to state their needs and teachers need to be able to represent what the boys have said both to other teachers, to parents and to other students. In this case the confidentiality agreement is more complicated. What the confidentiality agreement refers to is naming individuals who have been in the group and reporting their comments in the playground or to others.

What is understood by having the comments of the boys recorded and their list of suggestions of improving the tone of the school documented is, of course, not covered by confidentiality. If the purpose of the group is to draw up a list of suggestions then the boys need to clearly understand that what will happen to these suggestions.

This is an important motivating area as well. If the boys feel that their suggestions will be treated lightly or considered at some vague time in the future, in some process they have no knowledge of, then they will not be motivated to really think of solutions.

The feedback loop describe in this manual is an important element in building boys' confidence that their ideas are important and will count.

3. INTRODUCTORY EXERCISE

Place photos on the floor in front of group. Ask each boy to pick out one they like and say why.

4. WARM UP TO THE THEME

Pick a photo of someone that you would like to have in your class.
Pick a photo of someone you think would be a bit of an outsider at school.
If the girls in your class were shown these photos and asked to pick a boy they'd like for a friend, which one would they pick?

5. HOW THEY GET THEIR NEEDS MET

For each of these four themes, start with asking each boy to pick a photo and then lead to their wishes for change. Make someone a scribe, so that at the end of the session you have a list of changes under each heading.

5a) Need for FUN AND ENJOYMENT

Pick a photo of someone who is enjoying themselves (having fun)
How do you get a feeling of enjoyment at school? Can you think of a time when you enjoyed learning this year? What could people do differently to give younger boys more of a feeling of fun and enjoyment?

Prompt Ask about what teachers do.
"Think about a teacher where you have fun in their class, you enjoyed it, what did the teacher do to help make it fun?"

Prompt The "people" who could do things are teachers or older boys as well as girls. So you might rephrase the question for them as:
"*So what could the older kids here, the older boys, do differently so you boys could have more fun at school*?"

Prompt At some stage go for comparisons with girls
"Do girls have more fun or get treated differently?"

5b) Need for WORTH AND SUCCESS

Pick a photo of someone who is successful. What kinds of success are there?
How do you get a feeling of worth and success at school?
What could people do differently to give younger boys more of a feeling of worth or success?

5c) Need for RESPECT AND BELONGING

Pick a photo of someone who you would respect. What would you respect them for?

How do you get a feeling of respect and belonging at school?

What could people do differently to give younger boys more of a feeling of respect and belonging at school?

5d) Need for FREEDOM AND CHOICE

Pick a photo of someone who you think has freedom. What do they have the freedom to do?

How do you get a feeling of freedom and choice at school?

What could people do differently to give younger boys more of a feeling of freedom and choice at school?

By now the boys should have generated some ideas in the four areas. Streamline the feedback process by asking the boys in the group to vote on which three ideas they think are most important. (And clarify with the boy who will report back just what those points are.)

Thank them for their participation.

Case Study

In a rural high school, discussions of forty minutes duration were held with Year 7 and 8 boys. The recording method for this exercise was fairly simple. A list of needs from each group was compiled, duplicated ideas were edited out and then the list was presented to teachers.

The list of needs identified by the boys.

Year 7

More choice in subjects (maybe just a couple of electives)
More choice in sport
More choice in teachers
More games in class
Teachers not "go on and on"
Not get conflicting information from teachers (in maths)
More individual attention so that not waiting for others to catch up
Not copy down notes from OHT since some students are slow and teacher is always moving OHT up and down
Not so much writing
Teachers listen when being told student did not do something
Teachers give reasons for detentions
More D & T, Sport, Art
More excursions (see different places, have more leisure time with mates)
More access to sports equipment (bigger boys take it)
More sports equipment
More school sport teams (one for Year 7)
More variety in sport
More outdoor activity
Survival class in the bush
Sit where you want
Change core classes each year
Year 7 line at canteen
Stop bullying - more teachers on duty
Mark work quickly
Teachers help you when you need it
Shorter recess and lunch
Fix sports equipment like basketball rings
More bins
Bigger and better furniture such as desks
Music in class when we are working at something
Make sure learning new work
Learning HSIE project

Indonesian Party
Way side rest excursion
Skating
Movement in class

Year 8

Choose sports, projects in D&T
Shorter canteen lines
Make teachers not go off their rockers
Can't ask questions until end then forget
No explanation for putting on detention
More male teachers to teach English
Be nicer, bad day he's still angry from the previous class
Not so much writing
Go around the class reading it
More experiments
More topics they would like - gory stuff for example
More group work
More excursions
Teachers to explain things more
More respect from teachers
Indonesian - talking about sport - should do it
More practical
Go outside and draw
Drama - more practical
Uniform - jacket by Nike
Awards - Year 8 only not assembly, roll call
Year 12 should be kinder
Peer support
Mixed male/female sport
Better junior toilets
More sport, D&T, Art
Bigger change rooms in the hall
Allowed to go up the street
Easier to get SCAN awards, spread around not just smart people
Mixed ability class

Twelve staff were involved in the boys' groups. The results were taken back to staff meetings in faculty groupings and teachers responses to the boys' ideas were recorded.

Faculty Responses to "Asking the Boys" Workshop Results

PD/H/PE

- *label sports equipment (eg. year 7 balls, year 8 etc.) to allow more equitable access*
- *programming to allow for more groupwork*
- *set a quota of awards (to prevent devaluation of awards given out)*
- *investigate a school sports jacket*

HSIE

- *identify hands-on activities for in class*
- *target greater use of groupwork activities*
- *target double period fieldwork more often*

MATHS

- *more 7 & 8 excursions*
- *mark work more quickly*
- *mix up junior sport*
- *more access to sport*
- *more access to sport equipment*
- *change core classes each ear*
- *stop bullying*
- *teachers take more care to explain detentions*
- *awards at year assemblies*
- *mixed junior sport*
- *better junior toilets*

TAS

- *follow up boys workshops with summative evaluations*
- *more judicious use of OHPs*
- *more in-school based practical activities eg. young chef bake-off. Young design award activities*

ENGLISH

- *incorporate a few games into teaching method*
- *be more precise with class directions (not go on and on!); perhaps even try miming instructions*
- *smaller classes-blocking to allow withdrawal groups for extension and consolidation activities*
- *more concise use of OHPT; more pictures as headings etc.*
- *adopt computer activities into classroom for writing*

- *listen more to concerns; get students to write down their concerns*

SCIENCE

- *consider more outdoor activities*
- *investigate educational games suitable for science*
- *experiment with groupwork*
- *more loud bangs and gory guts experiments!*
- *look at alternative ways of getting information down other than writing (dictagloss?)*
- *4MAT Programming for year 7 units*
- *creative bookwork in an organised manner*

As a first response to the ideas of the boys, these points reflect the teachers' willingness to take the boys' suggestions seriously - an important message to feed back to the boys. But they clearly are restricted to the direct teaching style issues raised by the boys. Older boys bullying and the lack of respect identified in these points will require additional activities to be undertaken with other groups of students and across faculty boundaries. This exercise is best seen as a useful starting point for developing a dialogue with the boys.

Getting the most out of the PHOTOPAK exercise

As well as particular suggestions for improvements, however, comments about particular photos and about the school were recorded. This was an important part of the strategy for involving the staff in the whole process. Only some staff were involved in running the groups and the comments of the boys were used to give the remaining staff an idea of the tone and content of the discussions.

Experience to date indicates that when boys do feel safe to talk, the values they express are considerate of others to a degree which surprises teachers and parents. For example, asked to pick a photo of a man who was a success, boys will pick a photo of a man in a suit, indicating money, but will also pick up a photo of a man who is holding a baby, when asked why they have done this, boys will say "Because he is a father".

This sort of information is best recorded by a second person not the group facilitator, who is usually a teacher. In these cases a second teacher, the school counsellor, itinerant support teacher or other staff can act as a recorder. It is also possible to use older students to act as recorder, an arrangement that has the advantage of allowing the older boys to hear first hand the concerns and the desires of the younger boys.

While it is important to have only boys as participants in these groups, the groups have been run successfully with male and female facilitators and male and female recorders. It seems advisable, however, not to have both a female facilitator and a female recorder since

it may undermine the boys' perception that this is being treated seriously by males in the environment.

In the example above the boys' comments were noted using a sheet like this

DATE TIME RECORDER

COMMENTS ON PHOTOS	NEEDS	SUGGESTIONS

Reporting back

The report reproduced below, was completed by a consultant external to the school. It is included here to give an idea of the range of issues raised by the boys in their discussion groups. It also illustrates the use of a conciously positive tone. The boys' contributions are recorded faithfully in the report but the interpretation placed on the findings is deliberately forward-looking.

A report on Year 7 & Year 8 boys' needs to the staff of High School No1

Introduction

Year 7 and Year 8 boys met in small groups with one or two teachers as facilitators to discuss their needs. The groups of ten boys were selected in alphabetical order. Each group met for one period (40 minutes) with a set of photographs (Being a Man Photopak) and a prepared set of questions. After each set of discussions, teachers met briefly to debrief and clarify recorded comments from the groups.

Boys' reaction to the task

From all observations and reports of the teachers leading the groups, every group was willing to address the issues and contribute. At the start of each group an explicit agreement was made to keep the personal details of the discussion confidential. It was also made explicit, however, that the results of the boys' deliberations were to be passed on to the school executive for action. The facilitators were able to develop an informal atmosphere where boys' answers were not right or wrong. Some teachers reported a reaction of pleasant surprise from the boys when they realised that this was a special effort by the school to ask them (the boys) their views.

The range of needs identified by Year 7 and Year 8

Over 50 suggestions were given by the boys in answer to the questions "what could the school do to give you more success (and then, more freedom/enjoyment/ respect)?". Although the questions were asked for different areas of needs, the boys' answers were clearly applicable to more than one area. In a sense, boys were answering the general question "How could school be better?".

Popular subjects

Boys' sense of where they might experience success (freedom, achievement, enjoyment) clearly distinguished two groups of subjects. One group, of subjects, which involved practical activity, included sport, Design and Technology (D&T), and Art, was strongly endorsed in every group where enjoyment was discussed. Boys wanted to be more active during school hours. Design and Technology was also regularly mentioned in terms of success and achievement. Boys in several groups reported that they gained a sense of achievement when they completed a task without a great deal of teacher involvement, a typical comment was "Did it on your own". Cooking was also mentioned as an activity which was enjoyable, not solely because the boys were allowed to eat their finished product, but because the whole process was enjoyable and because, as one boy commented "You have to learn to cook sometime don't you?". For the boys in these groups, simply having more time in these activities would be an improvement.

Unpopular subjects

English and Maths were repeatedly cited as places where activity was non-existent and where they did not feel successful. Some discussions addressed the parallels between achieving success "on your own" in English and in Design and Technology. After hearing from the group how great D&T was compared to English, the question was asked. "Wait a minute, you get to do things by yourself or on your own in English too, don't you?". The group nodded in agreement. "So you can get a feeling of success there too, can't you?" While no specific reasons were articulated in response, the group definitely disagreed with this proposition.

Improving learning through more practical activities

The extent of practical work seemed to determine Science's standing. While the subject was not viewed as negatively as English and Maths, its redeeming feature was its inclusion of practical experiments. Boys clearly wanted more "hands-on" learning (this phrase was used in a number of groups). Indonesian was also mentioned in this context in some groups. In one, the specific suggestion was offered that when an Indonesian sport was covered during the lesson, this would provide an ideal practical activity - the class could go outside and try to play the game. Art, which was viewed positively in most discussions, could be further improved, it was suggested, by spending more time out of doors. (One of the images offered to the boys was a young man sitting on a rock shelf overlooking the ocean, drawing. This image was selected by a most groups as someone who was enjoying himself or successful). School excursion to distant locations were also mentioned as "getting outdoors", as well as going to an interesting place or "have more leisure time with mates".

Recognition and rewards

Boys raised the award system in some groups, or were directly questioned from the perspective of an interested outsider "What about the award system here, do you get certificates or something?" and then "Well, does it get you to study harder?" Boys reactions were mixed. The main drawback was seen to be teachers' inconsistencies in granting awards. Particular teachers were thought to hand out awards too easily. Other groups of boys stated a preference for lollies or something practical - a toy - rather than a piece of paper. One year 8 group discussed the process of being handed awards on the assembly. While they wanted to gain the awards they expressed strong dislike at having to risk embarrassment in front of the school assembly, "You might trip over". Instead they suggested the awards be given "just in the class" but agreed with a teachers' suggestion that in front of "just Year 8" would be OK.

Improvements in Teaching Style

Comments on teachers fell into two broad areas: writing management and justice. In line with boys' wish for more practical, active lessons, writing was seen as boring, unnecessary and frustrating. In some groups it seemed to be linked to teachers "going on and on". Many groups wanted less writing. Some had specific frustrations with teachers' management of the different writing speeds of students. Copying from overhead transparencies was highlighted since some students finished early and others were slow. Some groups questioned the belief that writing improved recall of information and expressed impatience at the low level technology of writing notes which could be photocopied. Summing up his preferences one boy commented "Don't make us keep writing... more making stuff instead of copying ... a boring book that you won't ever read again". Specific suggestions were to photocopy notes, go around the class reading rather than writing, more group work and more "gory stuff", or topics that the boys chose.

The second major improvement in teaching was to treat boys fairly. Being "yelled at" was identified as a problem, particularly for asking questions. "Teachers should be nicer" a year 7 boy suggested. Most negative comments, however, were to do with a lack of fairness from teachers. Getting put on detention, asking "Why?" and being told "You know why" was raised in some groups. While boys were aware of teachers' personal reactions to difficult classes, "He's had a bad day " or " He's still angry from the class before" they felt it did not justify "him yelling at us for nothing". Some groups thought that when there was trouble involving a boy and a girl that the boy was moved, not the girl. Boys were seen to get more detentions than girls for the same behaviour. Some groups wanted more male teachers, particularly for English, others gave female teachers as examples of "good teachers".

Respect

In a number of groups, the students were asked if they felt respect from older students or from teachers. In most cases the answer was an unequivocal "No". For teachers, the comments involving fairness and being "yelled at", described in the previous section, were used to illustrate the lack of respect. Year 10 boys were cited as "They just walk through

your handball game and kick the ball away" and "They don't go around just walk through you" and "They tell you you're dumb". The suggestions for improvements in sport related to this issue - having designated Year 7 equipment was suggested as the older boys took all the sporting gear. Having Year 7 teams so that more boys could be selected was related to older boys' higher abilities. Year 12 were named as the bullies by one group. Not all groups identified bullying as a problem, although it was not clear if this was because of the wide range of sizes among year 7 and 8 boys. "Little kids get put down" one boy explained. It was also apparent from the discussion in some groups that "respect" was not well defined in the boys' minds. Asked to select a photo of someone they "respected", one boy picked a photograph of a paraplegic and said he was "sorry for him". In another group boys asked if "to respect someone" was the same as "if you were afraid of him".

Choices

While many of the boys' responses applied to all four of the areas discussed in the groups, many comments identified boys' experience of lack of choice. Boys wanted more choice within subjects. More choice of sport, of tasks in design and technology, and of topics in English. Overall, most groups had difficulty identifying areas within school life where they felt that they had a choice. Having a choice of teacher was raised partly as a joke and partly as a serious request. One Year 7 group discussed what would happen if teachers were selected. The idea of teachers with no students was accepted as impractical. One compromise suggested was for each students to have one favourite teacher among his classroom teachers so that he would have at least one enjoyable subject. One important area of choice is in addressing grievances or suggesting improvements. Boys could not identify any acceptable avenue of complaint or referral in regards to bullying, teacher difficulties or any other problem at the school. The boys' Year Adviser, who was present in one of the discussions, was obviously well-liked by the boys. Yet no group saw him as someone to take up these issues.

Boys' values and involvement

Boys' frank answers and willingness to discuss issues was impressive The Itinerant Support Behaviour Disorder teacher who sat in on two of the groups commented "I have never heard these boys that I have in my groups talk like that". Their ability to nominate specific improvements provides the school with an excellent opportunity to engage the boys in designing a productive learning environment for all students. Their choices of photographs revealed values which the school and community would applaud. Asked to pick a photograph of a man or boy they would "respect", for example, one group of Year 8 boys chose: a man looking after a baby "because then the baby respects him"; a farmer holding a new born lamb "because he can look after animals"; two boys, one Aboriginal , one white, "because they can be friends"; and men in chemical protection suits in a contaminated worksite "because they risk their lives for us". Boys' comments expressed values of family, responsibility, working hard without thought of reward and looking after others. Their notions of having fun included achieving things by yourself, playing sport, drawing, being chosen to be in a play, helping people, mucking around and being outdoors. Success was identified as having money, but also working hard for a goal, having friends, having a family and being good at something.

STEP 6 Asking the Girls

In 1991, a national study was conducted (Australian Council for Educational Research. Listening to the Girls, 1992) to determine the adequacy of girls' education. Among the 1500 respondents, 800 girls from four to eighteen years were consulted, usually at their school, in small groups or alone, without their teachers present.

The comments by the girls about teaching and learning raised many of the same points as the boys at High School No 1, above. Both boys and girls dislike teachers who talk all the time or make students copy large amounts of material. Excursions are favoured over classroom learning and girls desire to be treated fairly as much as boys.

Girls also had particular concerns about the behaviour of boys. Year 7 girls interviewed at a rural state high school said:

> *They call you a dog and make comments about your body like: "Gee you've got big ones". You get sick of it.*
>
> *The boys "dak" you (they pull your pants down). I think its disgusting. We stand against the wall so they can't get you.*

And at a middle-class school charging moderate fees the girls reported:

> *The younger boys don't respect the girls. The senior students are selected to be bus monitors. The boys always act up on the bus, and they won't do what the girls say and they call us names. They do what the boys say, because the older boys intimidate them*

Harassment of girls by boys, the report noted, was a widespread and important negative factor in girls' education. Girls also complained of the constant disruption by boys and of teachers' attention being devoted to "keeping the boys under control".

This is an important difference between boys' and girls' needs. At one rural high school, (High School No 4) the Photopak idea was used with boys and girls in tandem. Since the Being a Man Photopak contained exclusively male images, the female teachers at the school pulled together a set of images from magazines etc. to use in the discussions with girls. The female teachers leading the discussions reported no difficulties with the girls being able to articulate their concerns. The girls identified a large range of needs that would give them greater freedom, choice, enjoyment and respect. While many comments echoed the need for imaginative and interesting classroom styles already identified by the boys, one major difference stood out when comparing the boys' and girls' lists. Among the girls' statement (and these comments were selected by each group as the most important points to report back), boys actions were prominent.

Girls' comments about boys at High School No 4

Years 7 & 8

We would like the boys to stop treating us like dogs
Boys don't harass us
Boys to treat us with respect
Boys don't judge us by the way we look
Teach the boys to treat us with respect (especially year 10 boys)
Would like older students (boys and girls) to be more friendly. We feel there is a barrier between the older and younger students
Some boys could stop making personal comments (appearance) and stop harassing girls who want to do well at their school work
Boys - don't put down in sport (features, looks)
Boys not hassling you/put downs
Boys not teaching the girls like objects
Boys treat you for who you are and not what you look like
We don't want to be harassed, put down by the Year 10 boys
Freedom of movement (Year 10 boys stop hassling people)
The boys cause trouble and make the teacher angry so they get up at everybody

The points made by Years 7 & 8 differed from those of Years 9 & 10 and Years 11 & 12. The focus on boys' behaviour evident in the junior years all but disappeared in the older student groups. Year 9 & 10 girls named boys only once: *Boys need to be more consistent in their behaviour to girls*. Harassment was mentioned by these girls, but the focus seemed to shift from direct name calling to boys' disruption in class and to equal treatment of girls by the school.

Years 9 & 10

Less harassment - more discipline
Settle down and be quiet
Stop mucking around
Stop putting girls down/jealous
Stop swinging on bars
Equal opportunity for males and females - eg. girls' rugby league
Some male teachers make sexist comments
Respect girls' abilities in class, and out of class
Sexist teachers are resented - girls need help too
A female and male year 9 adviser
There should always be a older lady there, for us girls to talk to
More choice of activity for female freedom - give girls a choice in sport

Years 11 & 12 girls did not mention boys or boys' behaviour. Their focus was exclusively on learning conditions and on removing restrictions on senior students in their use of free time.

The process of reporting back the findings at this school provided some interesting pointers. As the groups finished their discussions on the set of questions given earlier, they returned to the library. The ten boy's groups were seated on the floor on the one side and the ten girl's groups arranged on the opposite side. The deputy principal conducted the reporting back session by calling on one student from each group, alternating between boy and girl groups, to read out their group's main points from the butcher's paper sheet.

In this procedure a number of contrasts between the boys and girls stood out clearly. Among the comments themselves, the complaints of the girls about the boys formed a significant part of their reports. For the boys, not one group mentioned girls in any way. As the girls read out their points, with added comments, examples and explanations, the boy's inarticulate reports seemed to be lost in the process (this was less true, but still apparent, for senior groups). As well, the girls' points in relation to other aspects of the school, such as older girls smoking in the toilets, and boring lessons were, in the main directed at students not present or "the school authorities". Boys, however, were present and so the girls were able to make their points directly to the offending group with some effect. Boys began playing out the complaints of the girls on the spot by being restless, calling out and requiring the deputy to threaten them to maintain order. They also began to loudly defend themselves, making counter claims about the girls' behaviour. The overall effect of the reporting back session was to highlight the antagonism between the two groups, while reinforcing to staff present that the boys were inarticulate and immature.

This description contains hints for those planning single sex discussions to identify needs. Junior girls (and senior girls in some areas) are likely to see boys as part of the problem. Boys are unlikely to identify troublesome girls in the same fashion. Girls may well be more able to articulate their ideas in a large group setting while boys may resort to disruptive tactics to deflect criticism.

Since the girls' criticisms contain important information for the boys to hear, the task for the school is to arrange the feedback process so that the boys can respond appropriately. This will require the information to be communicated in a way which minimises the confrontational atmosphere and provides a safe space for boys to explore their responsibilities in creating a productive school climate for all students.

On a more general note, the idea of involving both girls and boys in the process of developing a boys' education strategy is sound. However, as is illustrated in the example given here, the way girls are consulted and the timing of the different activities with each group needs careful thought.

Note: Asking the Girls in Boys-only Schools

For boys-only schools the simple comparison with girls will not be possible. However girls' views are still relevant and alternative methods to bring girls into the process need to be found.

While boys-only schools do not have girls sitting side by side with boys to provide a first hand perspective, most boy's schools have cordial relations with at least one sister school. Girls in these schools can be asked for their views of the boys. This need not be couched in exclusively negative terms. Girls can identify qualities that they appreciate in the boys, as well as behaviours that they dislike, thus providing a basis for discussion among the boys and for a further exchange of ideas between boys and girls.

Appendix 1	Overhead transparency graphs and lists	19 pages
Appendix 2	Activities of the Men and Boys Project 1996/97	4 pages
Appendix 3	Benchmarks	2 pages
Appendix 4	Sons living with a male parent	2 pages
Appendix 5	Draft guidelines for Involving Volunteers	2 pages
Appendix 6	Boys' Education Strategy 1995	28 pages
Appendix 7	Testosterone Poisoning or Terminal Neglect?	12 pages
Appendix 8	Boort Secondary College Boys' Education Plan	6 pages

Information on The Men and Boys Project
Order Form

Appendix 1

Overhead transparency graphs and lists.

Graphs 1 - 8
HOW ARE MEN AND BOYS DOING?

These graphs provide an overview of the state of health of men and boys. For a fuller description of Men's Health issues and for an account of their development in Australia, see **Appendix 5 Testosterone poisoning or terminal neglect? The Men's Health issue.**

Notes on causes of death for graphs:

a) Congenital anomalies
Includes cardiac anomolies incompatable with life

b) Nervous system diseases
Includes serious Spina Bifuda

c) Mental disorder
Includes the organic psychotic conditions such as schizophrenia and the major drugs of dependence such as heroin and the barbiturates.

d) Digestive
Includes liver diseases.

e) Endocrine
Includes diabetes.

Graphs 9 and 10
LITERACY AND POST-SCHOOL OUTCOMES

These graphs illustrate how we may shift our thinking about what matters for boys and girls.

In 1975 the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) began testing a large representative sample (6,500) of 14 year olds for mastery of basic literacy and numeracy. About 70% overall achieved mastery of literacy In 1995 it was the same. For numeracy the figures were 75% in 1975 and 80% in 1995.

For both years, 1975 and 1995, boys were slightly ahead of girls in numeracy. But the twenty year period saw a widening gap between boys' and girls' literacy. Boys were 3% lower in 1975 and 8% in 1995.

Now traditionally, the fact that boys did not read as well as girls was not seen as a remarkable event. Traditionally, when we have looked at the outcomes of schooling we have used labour market outcomes, particularly economic indicators, to measure success.

The two sets of figures given in graphs 9 & 10 illustrate the difference in the approach to gender equity of the 1980s from that of the 1990s.

In the first graph, the outcomes in terms of income for the highest achievers in literacy (Very High) and the lowest (Very Low) are given according to their income level at 19 years of age. This is the traditional way of evaluating what happens to boys and girls after they leave school. As can be seen, even the poorer male students, in terms of literacy, were earning more than the best female students. It is this sort of inequality in the work place which reveals the continuing needs of girls to be addressed.

The second graph, Graph 10, reveals another need and suggests another way of looking at school outcomes. The figures for this graph come from the same ACER study and use the same categories of very high and very low. It is important to stress that this perspective does not negate the girls' needs identified in the previous graph (Graph 9) . But is does suggest that income level is not the only useful measure. The clear message of Graph 10 is that literacy is an important predictor of unemployment for boys. (And unemployment, in turn, is an important predictor of poor health and health damaging behaviour among males).

Source: Ainley J. Reading and Numeracy in Junior Secondary School: Trends, Patterns and Consequences. ACER March 1997.

Graphs 11 to 14
BOYS, YOUNG MEN AND ROAD TRAFFIC

In 1996 the Men and Boys Project completed research into young males' driving as part of a NRMA funded study of the way fathers teach their sons to drive. These graphs are derived from that research.

One important point to be made is that while things ion our society do change, the problems of men do not necessarily just go away.

More women now own and drive cars than in earlier generations. More young women now consume high levels of alcohol. But as these graphs illustrate, on a variety of major indicators, males come off worse than females.

Graph 11

The categories shown are (convictions for): theft, dangerous driving, and driving with a

proscribed level of alcohol.

Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. New South Wales Criminal Courts Statistics 1995. Sydney NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 1996

Graph 12

Graph 12 shows categories of road user deaths: driver, passenger, Pedestrian, motor cycle rider (driver and pillion), bicycle rider.

Source: Federal Office of Road Safety Road fatalities Australia 1996 Statistical summary, Table 3. 1997

Graph 13

Graph 13 shows those involved in speeding crashes who were killed (fatal) admitted to hospital or treated for an injury

Source: NSW Road Traffic Accident Database, 1994

Graph 14

NSW has had Random Breath Testing since the early 1980s. Alcohol-related road deaths have dropped. But of those 17-20 years of age who are killed on the roads with high blood alcohol levels, a clear majority are still male.

Source: Road Traffic Authority of New South wales. Annual Road Traffic Accident data 1985 to 1995

Graph 15
SPORTS INJURIES

This graph is often a surprise to lay and professional audiences. It is not included here to suggest that we stop playing sport. It does suggest that the outcomes for boys and girls are very different and that we should rethink the way we encourage boys to enjoy sport.

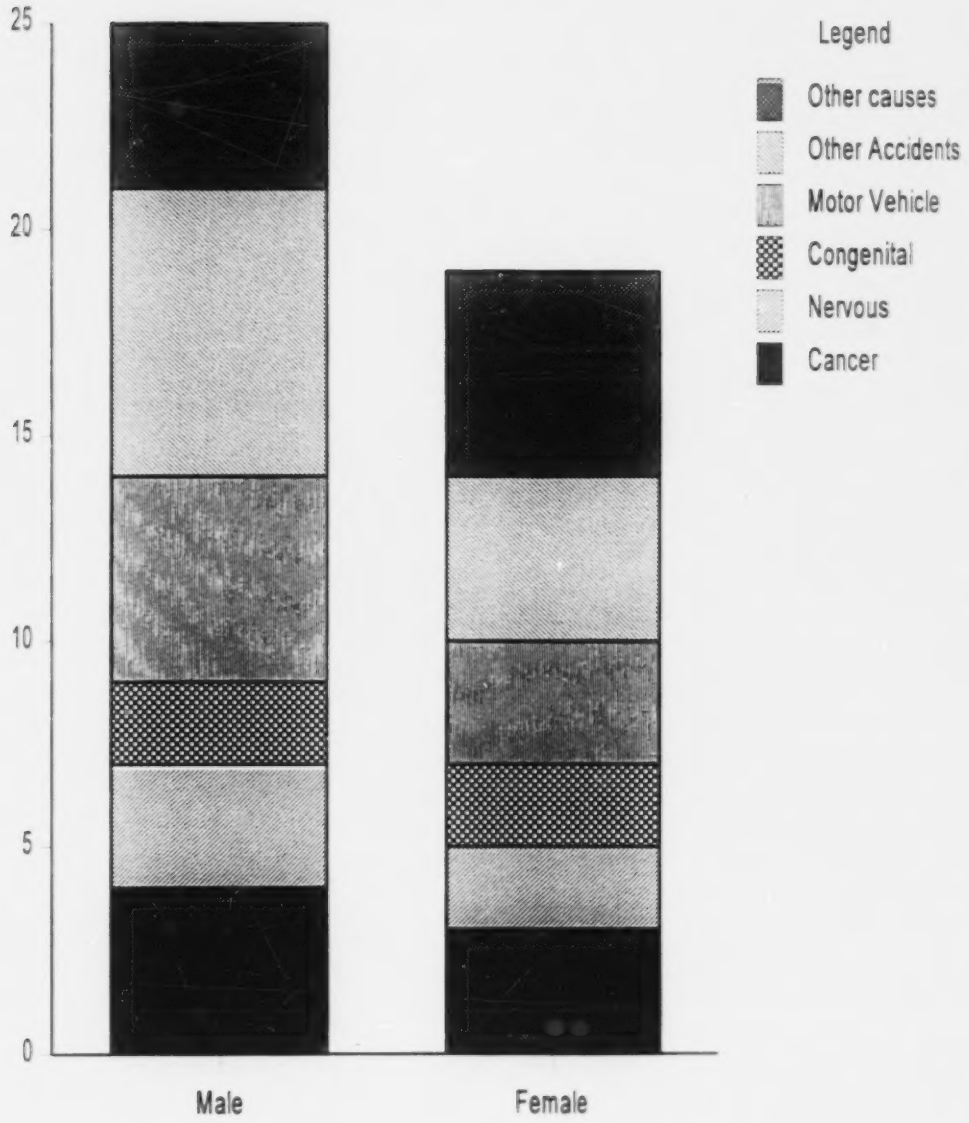
Source: Vimpani G, Fletcher R, Vorobioff W. Male Adolescent Health Outcomes Project Report. Wallsend: Hunter Child Adolescent and Family Health Service November 1995.

Lists 1 and 2
Summary of health and education concerns

These summarise the concerns expressed by health workers and by teachers around Australia. The figures are indicative only, that is, some figures apply to one particular region where data has been collected, others are national. The figures for suicide, for example, vary according to whether we are talking about rural or urban settings and between states. The idea is not to start a technical argument about the best way to portray any statistic, but to summarise the variety of concerns.

Graph No 1
Men and Boys Project

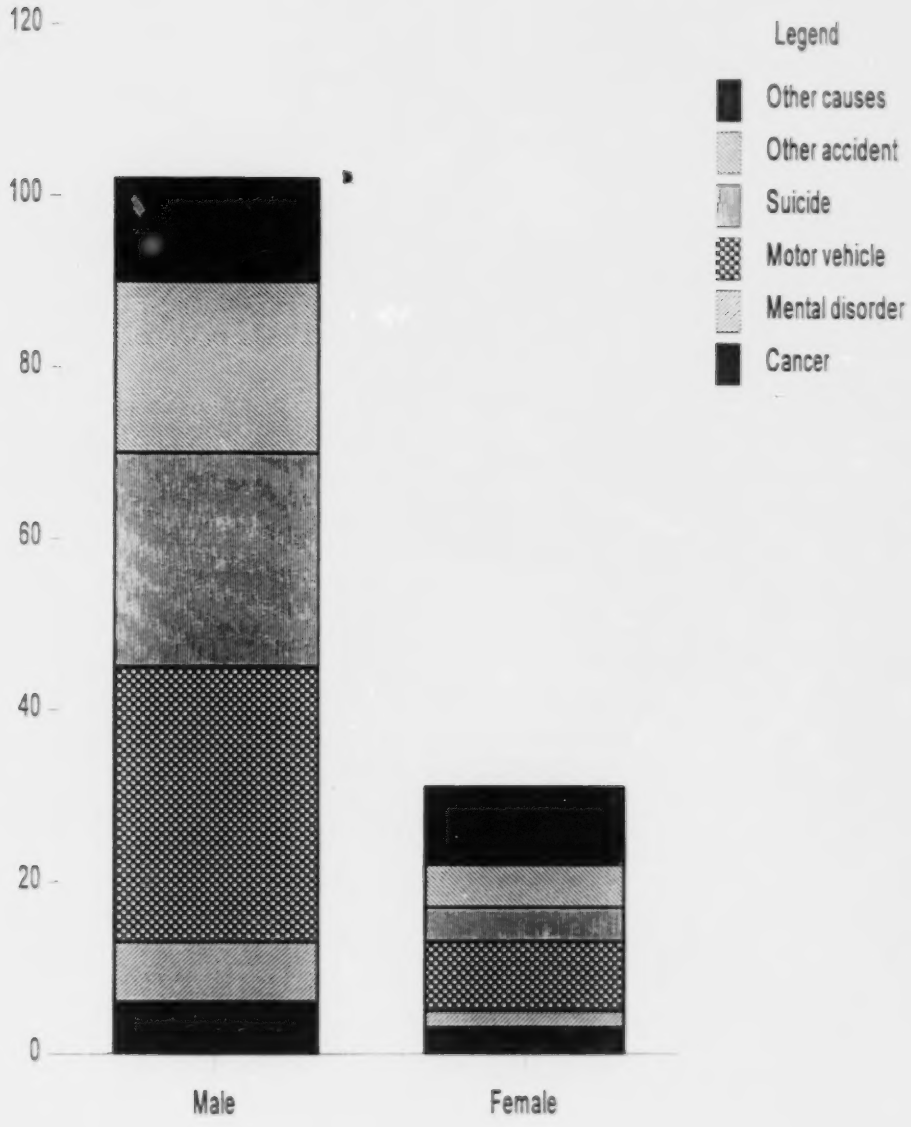
MAJOR CAUSES OF DEATH
For 1-14 Year Olds



Note: All figures shown are deaths per 100,000
Source: Drawn from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Causes of Death 1996

Graph No 2
Men and Boys Project

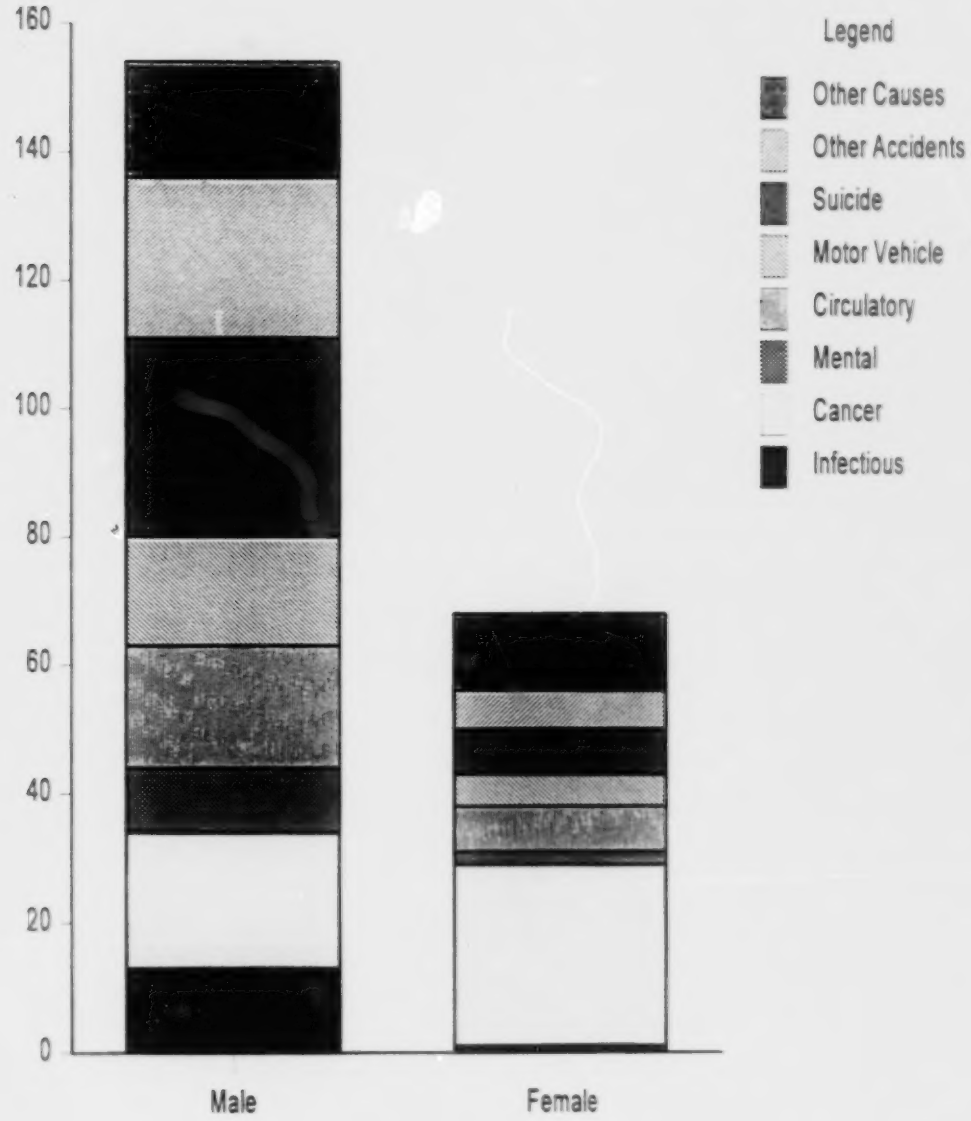
MAJOR CAUSES OF DEATH
For 15-24 Year Olds



Note: All figures shown are deaths per 100,000
Source: Drawn from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Causes of Death 1996

Graph No 3
Men and Boys Project

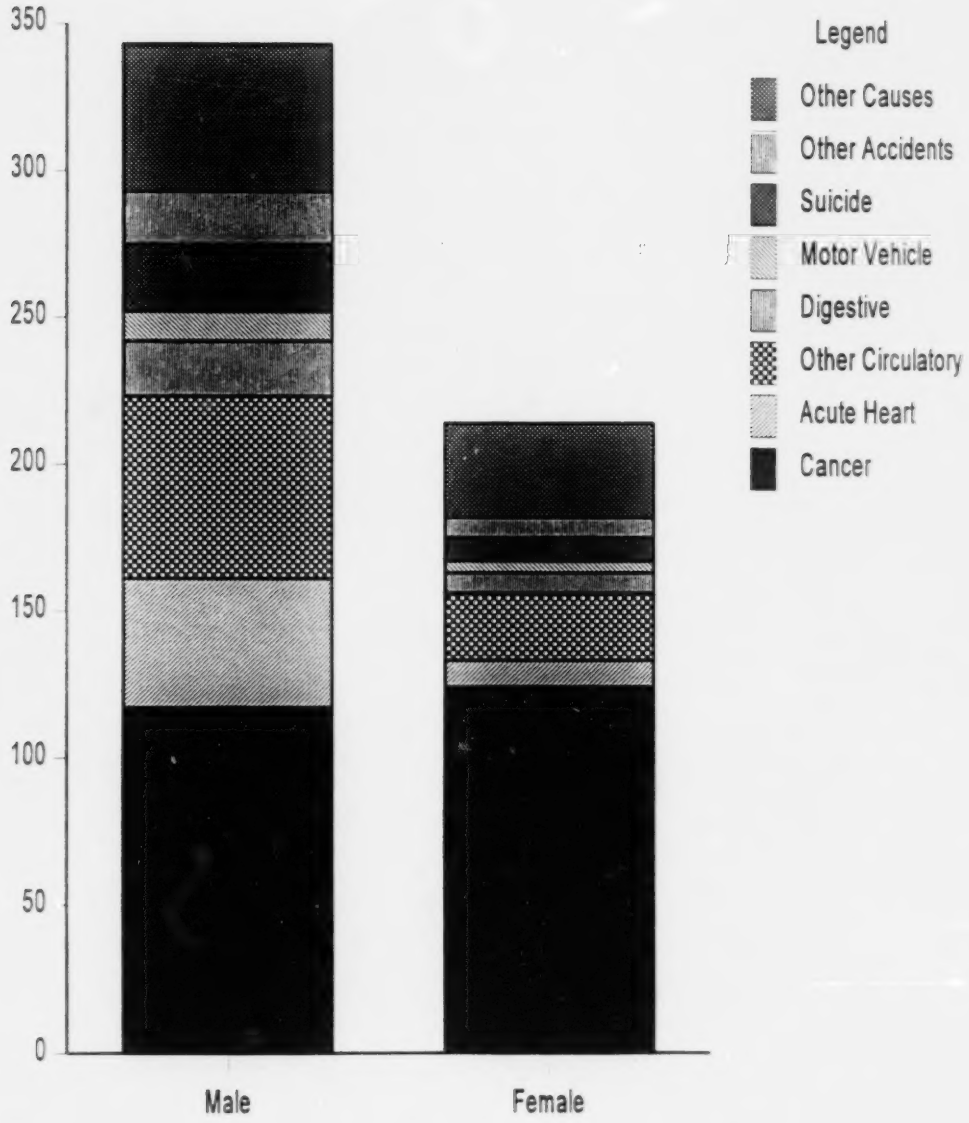
MAJOR CAUSES OF DEATH
For 25-44 Year Olds



Note: All figures shown are deaths per 100,000
Source: Drawn from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Causes of Death 1996

Graph No 4

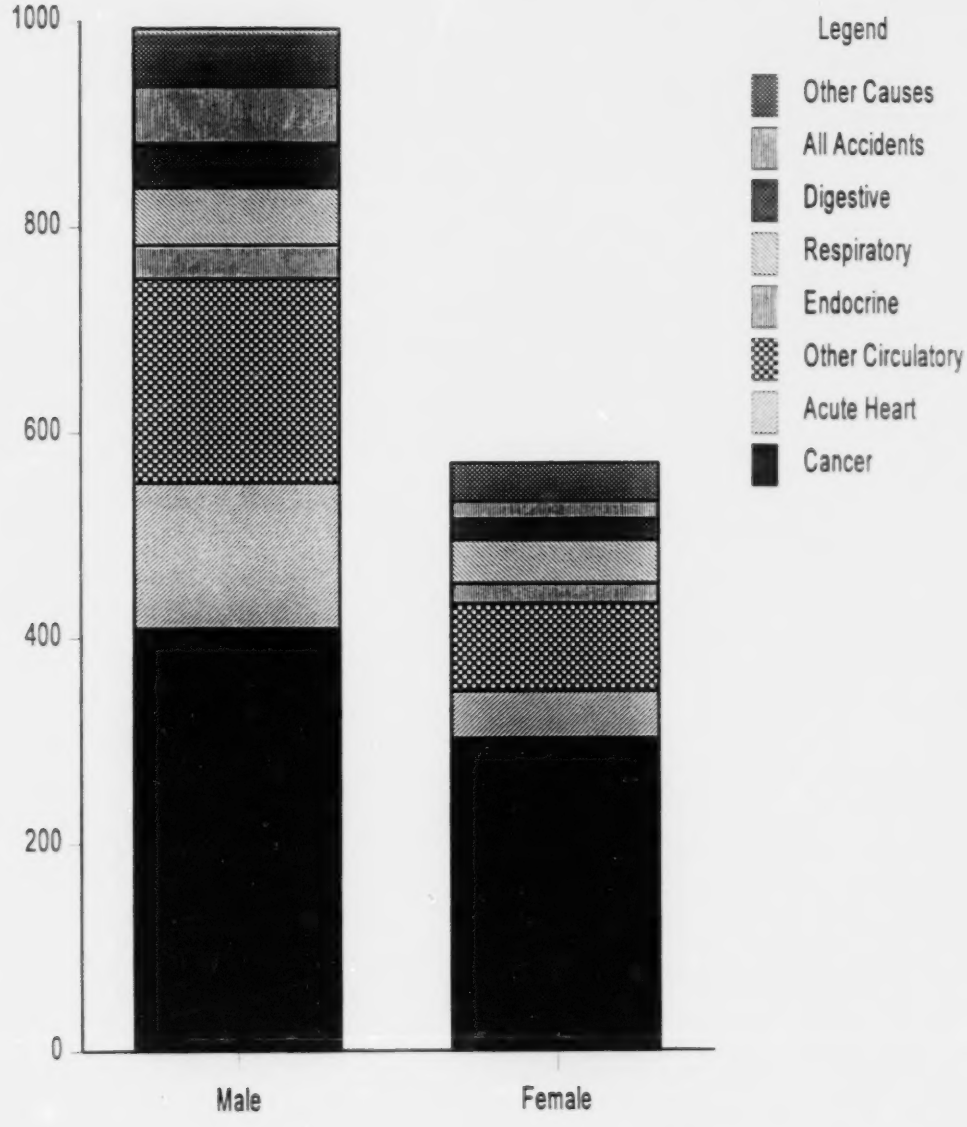
MAJOR CAUSES OF DEATH
For 45-54 Year Olds



Note: All figures shown are deaths per 100,000
Source: Drawn from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Causes of Death 1996

Graph No 5
Men and Boys project

MAJOR CAUSES OF DEATH
For 55-64 Year Olds

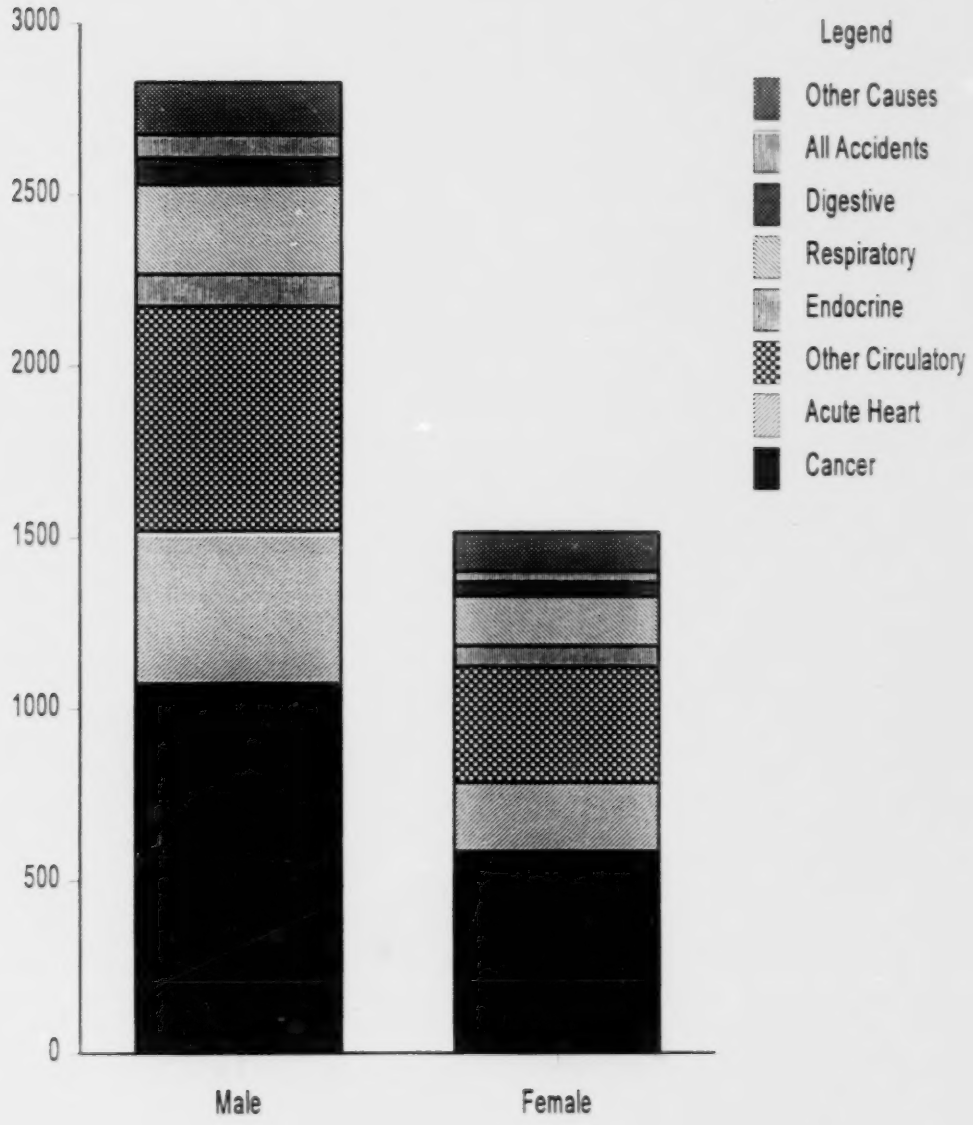


Note: All figures shown are deaths per 100,000
Source: Drawn from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Causes of Death 1996

Graph No 6

Men and Boys Project

MAJOR CAUSES OF DEATH
For 65-74 Year Olds

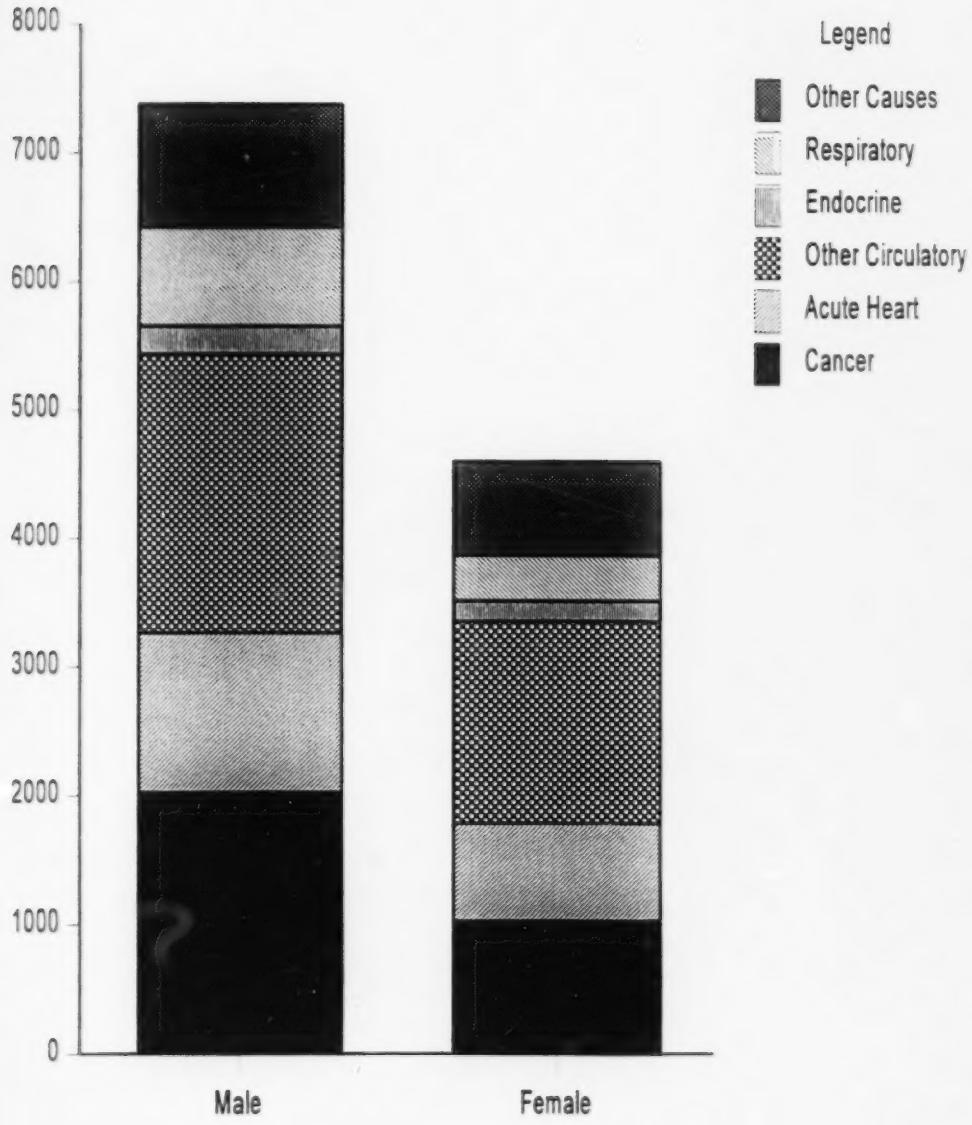


Note: All figures shown are deaths per 100,000

Source: Drawn from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Causes of Death 1996

Graph No 7

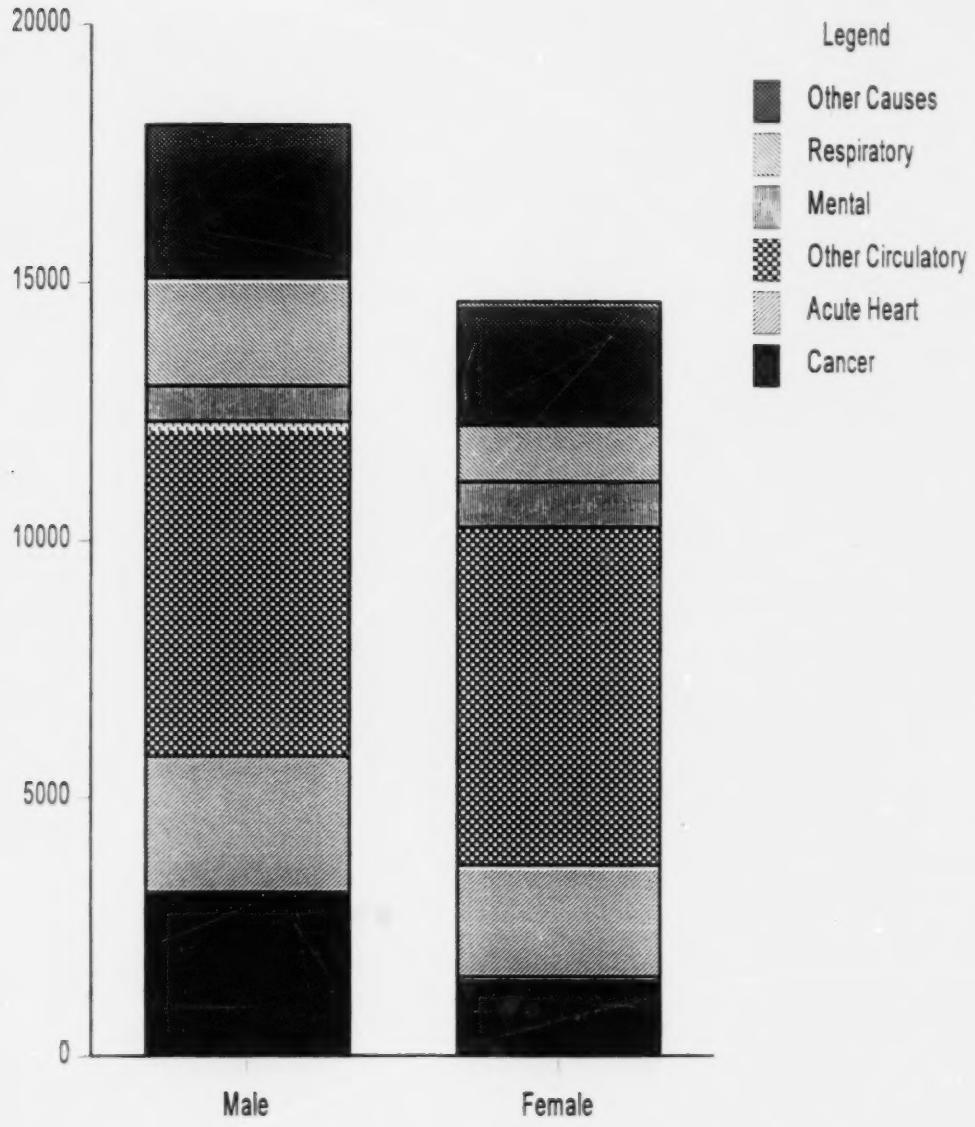
MAJOR CAUSES OF DEATH
For 75-84 Year Olds



Note: All figures shown are deaths per 100,000
Source: Drawn from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Causes of Death 1996

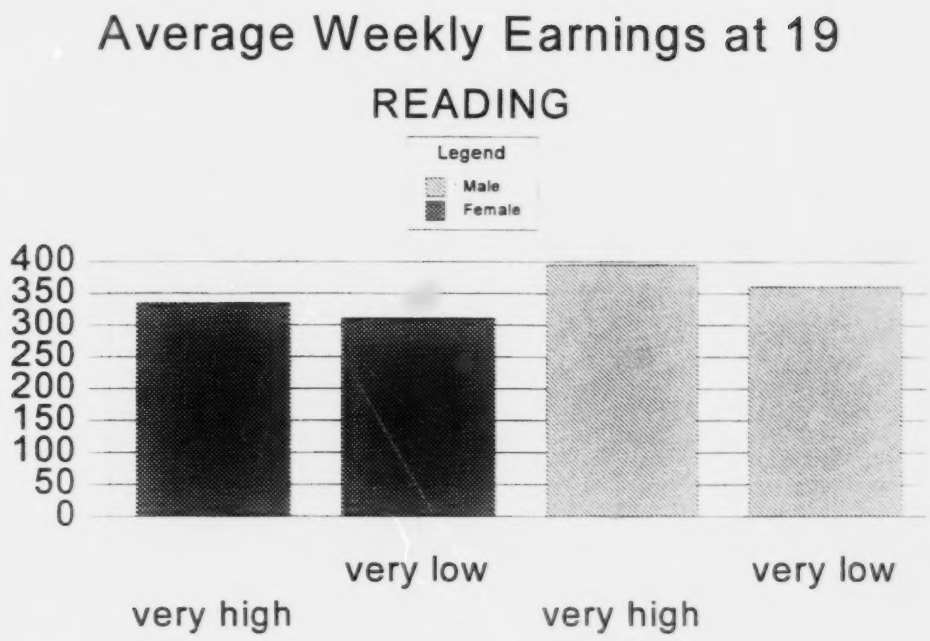
Graph No 8
Men and Boys Project

MAJOR CAUSES OF DEATH
For 85+ Year Olds

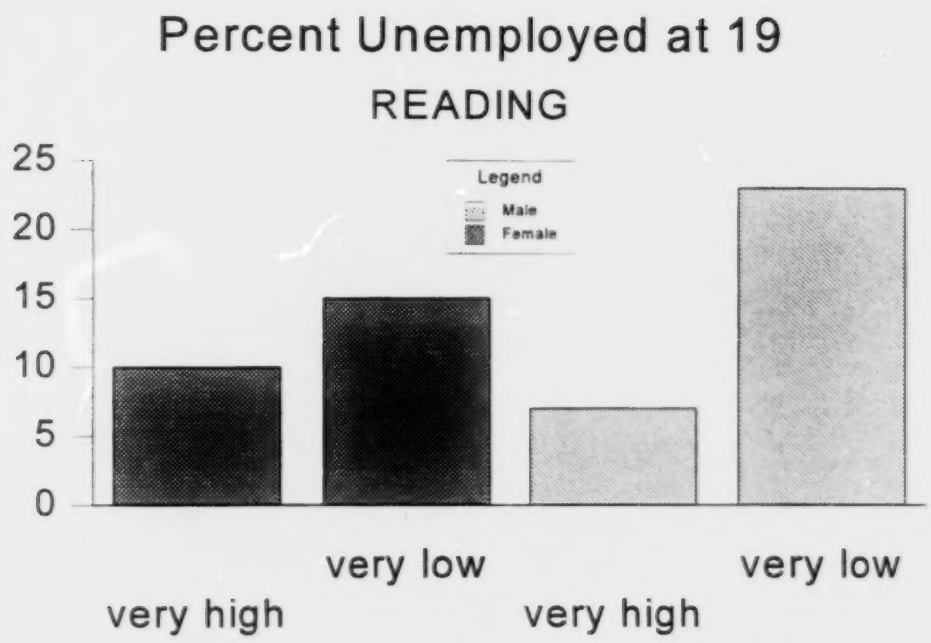


Note: All figures shown are deaths per 100,000
Source: Drawn from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Causes of Death 1996

Graph 9
Men and Boys Project

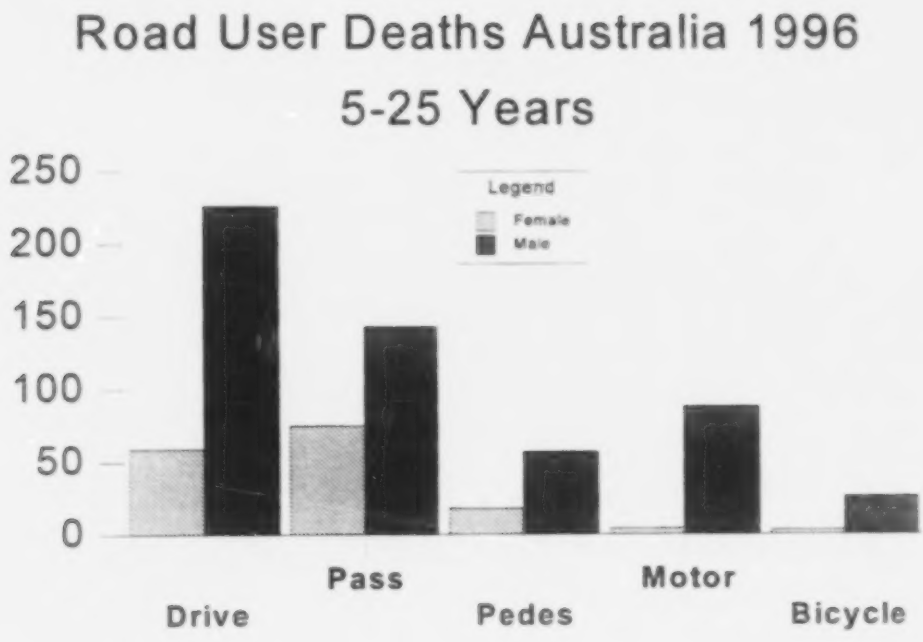


Graph 10
Men and Boys Project



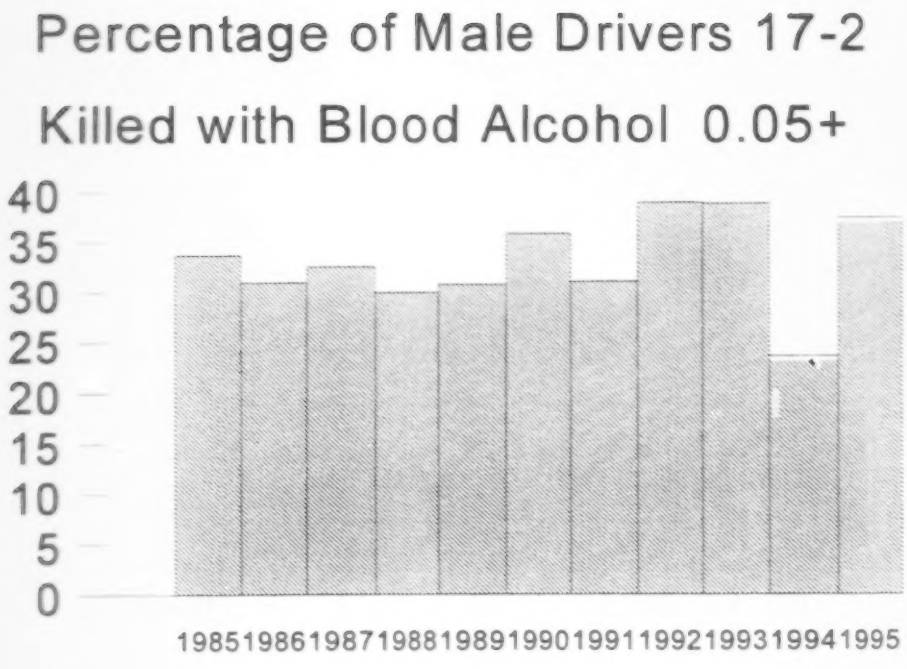
Graph 11
Men and Boys Project

Graph 12
Men and Boys Project

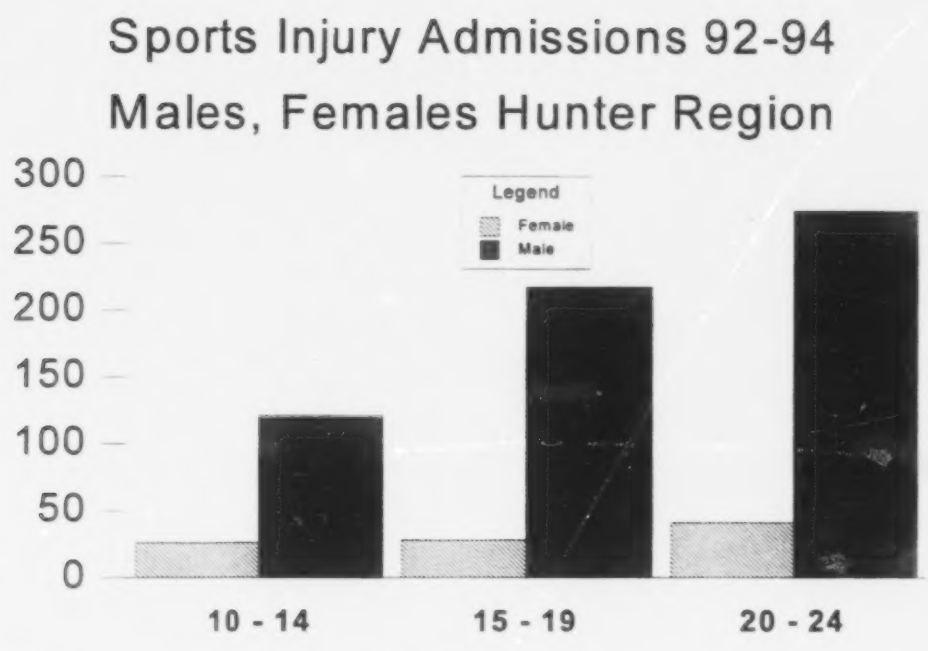


Graph 13
Men and Boys Project

Graph 14
Men and Boys Project



Graph 15
Men and Boys Project



List 1

MEN AND BOYS PROJECT
UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

OUTCOMES FOR BOYS - LIFE

Injury deaths	**2:1**
Commit serious assaults	**9:1**
Suicide	**5:1**
Convicted on a drugs charge	**9:1**
Killed at work	**6:1**
Permanently disabled	**7:1**

Teenage boys and young men do not access health services as often as teenage girls and young women.

List 2
MEN AND BOYS PROJECT
UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

OUTCOMES FOR BOYS - ACADEMIC

* **10% fewer boys complete Year 12**

* **75% of schools suspensions**

* **60% of school counsellors**

* **90% emotional and behavioural disturbance**

* **75% of language or intensive reading classes**

Boys do considerably worse in Basic Skills English tests at all ages

Appendix 2

Activities of the Men and Boys Project 1996/97

The men and boys project offers seminars to health and education professionals and also to parents and community groups.

MEN AND BOYS PROJECT 1996

DATE	PLACE	ACTIVITY
March	West Wyalong High School NSW	One day presentation to all staff: Boys Education
March	Whitebridge High School NSW	Evening presentation to staff and parents : Boys Education
April	Prospect High School Launceston, TAS	Interview boys from the school to determine their views on school changes
April	Prospect High School Launceston, TAS	Workshop with teaching staff
April	Campbell Town District High School, TAS	Workshop with teaching staff and Interview boys from the school to determine their views on school changes
April	Campbell Town District High School, TAS	Workshop with staff, school council, Parents and Friends
April	University of Tasmania TAS	Presentation to Health Studies students
April	Launceston TAS	Guest Speaker, Men's Health and Well Being Seminar for General Practitioners and Allied Health professionals
April	Launceston Grammar School, TAS	Presentation to parents and staff. Workshop for staff.
April	Great Northern Hotel Launceston, TAS	Address Breakfast Meeting. Personal Development Association
May	Cannon Hill Anglican College QLD	One day presentation to all staff: Boys Education. Evening presentation to staff and parents : Boys Education
May	Chatham High School NSW	One day presentation to all staff: Boys Education
May	Indooroopilly QLD	One day presentation to 45 Christian Bros teaching and welfare staff from QLD.
May	Medowie Primary School NSW	Seminar presentation to Primary Principals Group
June	Dubbo RSL Club NSW	Conference address and workshop for 100 teachers from western NSW.
June	Kahibah Public School NSW	Seminar presentation to staff, parents
June	Lake Macquarie High School NSW	Seminar presentation to staff
Jul	University of NSW	Address and workshop for NSW Guidance Conference

MEN AND BOYS PROJECT 1996

Jul	Evans High School NSW	One day presentation to all staff: Boys Education
Jul	Newcastle Grammar School, NSW	One day presentation to all staff: Boys Education
Jul	Darling Harbour Sydney NSW	Plenary address: Preventing male youth suicide. National Gender and Suicide Conference
July	Toowoomba QLD	Seminar for OH&S officers : Men's Health in the workplace
July	Toowoomba QLD	Seminar for Community Health Workers: Men's Health
July	Toowoomba QLD	Conference: Darling Downs Education Conference
July	Macquarie Hospital Sydney, NSW	Address to Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. Men's Health Day
August	Family Resource Centre Cairns, QLD	Seminar: Men's Health in rural and remote areas
August	Pacific International Hotel Cairns, QLD	Keynote Address: Conference: Directors of Nursing
September	Newcastle Grammar School, NSW	Lecture for parents: Improving Boys' Health & Education
September	Perth, WA	Seminar ACHPER : Boys' Health for PDHPE teachers
September	Fremantle Hospital, WA	Lecture for WA Venereology Society : Men's Health
September	Fremantle FRCGP, WA	Consult with FRCGP
September	Perth Curtin University, WA	Seminar: Improving Boys' Health
September	Fremantle Hospital, WA	Lecture for Postgraduate Medical Staff: Men's Health
September	Bunbury WA	Seminar on Men's Health for Community Health Centre
September	Perth, WA	Seminar: Men's Health & Wellbeing
September	Perth, WA	Seminar: Men's Health Community Workshops
September	Logan QLD.	Consultancy with General Practitioners Adolescent Suicide project

MEN AND BOYS PROJECT 1996

October	London , UK	Plenary Address: What Next For Men? Conference
October	The Hague Netherlands	Presentation to Van Leer Foundation - Families and Men's Health
October	Sheffield, UK	Seminar for General Practitioners: Men's Health - what are the issues?
October	Sheffield, UK	Workshops for health workers involved with Men's Health Networks
October	Manchester , UK	Plenary address: What next for boys? Conference.
October	London, UK	Seminar presentation London Health Education Authority: Men's Health - what are the issues?
November	Albury NSW	Seminar for teachers: Improving Boys Health and Education
November	Albury NSW	Seminar for Health professionals: Improving Men's Health
November	Albury NSW	Public Meeting : Boys' Health, Men's Health.
November	Finley NSW	Seminar for teachers: Improving Boys Health and Education
November	Deniliquin NSW	Seminar for Health professionals: Improving Men's Health
November	Ingleburn H/S NSW	Seminar for all staff: Boy's Health and Education
November	Nowra, NSW	Seminar: Young Men and Risk Taking for Secondary and Primary teachers
November	Nowra, NSW	Public seminar : Young men and Boys.
November	Nowra, NSW	Young Men and Mental Health Seminar for Health Workers
December	Tocal Agricultural College, NSW	Seminar for all staff: Young Men's Health and Education

MEN AND BOYS PROJECT 1997

DATE	PLACE	ACTIVITY
February	Sydney, NSW	Presentation - Enough is Enough anti-violence conference.
February	Oberon, NSW	Seminar for high School, staff and parent groups
February	Oberon, NSW	Public talk : Boys Health - Oberon RSL
February	Oberon, NSW	Identify Boys' Needs -Facilitate all male student groups Year 7 - 11
February	Maitland, NSW	Presentation to Primary School principals from Newcastle and Hunter Region - Maitland City Bowling Club.
April	Canberra, NSW	Keynote address: Men's Health Conference
April	Erina Heights, NSW	Staff development day. Central Coast Grammar School
April	Biloela, QLD.	Occupational Health & Safety talk: Men's Health. Callide Power Station
April	Biloela, QLD.	Staff development day. Biloela State High School.
April	Biloela, QLD.	Health and welfare services seminar
April	Biloela, QLD.	Public talk: Boys Health - Presbyterian Hall.
April	Newcastle, NSW	Presentation: Social Justice and Gender - Newcastle TAFE.
April	Sydney, NSW	Presentation: Fathers talking to their sons about risky driving. NRMA Conference, NSW Parliament.
May	Edensor Park, NSW	South West Sydney -Primary Principals Conference - Presentation: Improving Boys Health and Education - Novotel, Wollongong.
May	Edensor Park, NSW	Workshops: Boys programmes for Primary Schools
May	Cairns QLD	Rural Health Training Unit One week training course for health workers and teachers. Two day training for indigenous health workers
May	Singleton, NSW	Presentation: Teachers Workshop and public meeting with parents - Singleton Public School.
May	Rottnest Island, WA	Presentation: Men's Health Forum - Fremantle Division of General Practice.

MEN AND BOYS PROJECT 1997

DATE	PLACE	ACTIVITY
May	Fremantle, WA	Seminar for teachers, administrators, school psychologists, parents etc.: Keeping boys alive and functioning well; - in school and at home. -
May	Albany, WA	Seminar: Young Men and Mental Health - Community Health Workers. Seminar: Boys Education Strategies - Teachers
May	Albany, WA	Seminar: Boys Education Resources - Teachers Seminar: Mid Life Crisis for Men - Health & Welfare Workers.
May	Albany, WA	Seminar: Men's Health - Great Southern Division of General Practice
June	Erina Heights, NSW	Parent Meeting. Central Coast Grammar
June	Springwood, QLD.	Seminar: Identifying Barriers to Young Males Accepting Health Services. Men's Health Forum - Logan Area Division of General Practice.
June	Nowra, NSW	Seminar: Teachers - Boys Education
June	Nowra, NSW	Public Meeting - Boys and Men
June	Newcastle, NSW	RTA Vehicle Inspectors - Men's Health & OHS
July	Finley, NSW	Staff development day - Finley High School - evening discussion with P&C.
July	Finley, NSW	Student workshop - Finley High School Students.
July	Melbourne, VIC.	Workshop: Making the difference with boys and dads. - International School Psychology XXTH Annual Colloquium, University of Melbourne
July	Bendigo, VIC.	Seminar: Boys' Education - Bendigo
July	Bendigo, VIC	Workshop: Boys Education - Bendigo
August	Brisbane, QLD	Seminar: Teachers - St Laurence College
August	Brisbane, QLD	Parent Meeting
September	Sydney, NSW	Fathering the Future seminar
September	Sydney, NSW	Consultation NSW Men's Health Strategy

MEN AND BOYS PROJECT 1997

DATE	PLACE	ACTIVITY
September	Salamander Bay NSW	Itinerant Support Behaviour Disorder teachers - present workshop
September	Canberra ACT	Address Men's Health Seminar, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs
October	Orange, NSW	Seminar: Teachers - Boys Education Strategies Kinross Wolaroi College, Orange
October	Orange, NSW	Parent Meeting Kinross Wolaroi College, Orange
October	Orange, NSW	Men's Health - presentation for Health Workers
October	Orange, NSW	Preventing suicide in young males - a public health approach. Seminar for mental health workers
October	Gosford NSW	Seminar for St Edwards College
October	Sydney NSW	Seminar for Peer Support Foundation
October	Fremantle, WA	Presentation at 2nd National Men's Health Conference
November	Newcastle NSW	Men's Health seminar for male workforce, Newcastle Herald
November	Coolangatta QLD	Boys' Education seminar for principals of independent schools
December	Tamworth NSW	Men's Health - presentation for Health Workers
December	Tamworth NSW	Preventing suicide in young males - a public health approach. Seminar for mental health workers

Appendix 3
Benchmarks

Absence notes and truancy - explained/unexplained

Accident reports eg. Playground, sporting. Sickbay

ADD/ADHD

Attendance (100%)

Award Ceremonies - male/female ratio

Award of Merit Certificates/Certificates of Excellence

Behaviour in school yard

Boys/Girl numbers in streamed classes

Bus offenders

Bus monitors

Carnival attendance and participation

Classroom disruptions/Class captains

Committee involvement eg. Dance, liturgy

Co-operation in small group tasks

Correctional methods used on boys and girls

Counsellor referrals

Drug use - alcohol / substance/smoking in school

Degree of embarrassment

Graffiti/littering

Incidents of violence and aggression. And/or victim of.

Jobs - (Part time jobs - who has them?)

Kids in "voluntary" competitions

K to Year 6 changes

Lateness to school

Leadership - nominations for Captains

Learning difficulties

Letters of notification - discipline - assessment

Library use - Fiction/non fiction

Literacy

Lower reading ages

Neatness - hygiene/bookwork/dress

Nominations for student of the week

Non-Homework

Number of boys attending social functions organised by school

Number of boys on SRC

Obscene Language

Participation in general discussion, school activities

Participation in Arts/Drama, Music/Choir

Participation in School Assembly Prayer

Peer Support - leaders, satisfaction

Percentage of boys choosing - Music/Art/Drama/Home Science/Textiles (for student electives)

Percentage of boys/girls Representative Teams

Percentage of boys volunteering -

charity work, organising Year activities

Percentage of boys representing/performing in musical/public speaking/debating/choir/band

Percentage of boys with documented discipline problems with no father figure.

Percentage of boys - Lunchtime detention/suspension/drug related incidents

Percentage of boys - top classes - English/Maths/Science

Percentage of boys - Gifted and talented program

Playground behaviour

Position - Males in bottom level classes

Recognition for sport achievement

Recognition in newsletters of students

Reports/marks/comments

School Certificate grades

School leavers - their destination - apprenticeships - other jobs

School population - male/female ratio

Single Parent families - which parent child lives with / attitude

Social isolation

SRC

STAR camp/participation on camps

Student referrals -, afternoon

Student review

Suspension record

Teacher complaints refer to boys

TER results- top 5% in subjects - quality of assignments - assessment tasks and exam results

Time out room

Transition problem Year 6 to Year 7

Tudor Group Reps.

Use of computer room

Use of playground facilities

Use of practical materials eg. hands on science

Willingness to be in non-sexist play

Who is classed as overweight

Appendix 4
Sons Living with A Male Parent.

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures

MALES AND FEMALES 15-19 YEARS LIVING WITH A MALE PARENT

Age	Male		Female	
	Living with male parent	Percent of age group	Living with male parent	Percent of age group
15	98,346	79.6	92,605	78.8
16	100,081	76.2	94,205	74.9
17	99,035	73.6	90,449	70.5
18	89,581	65.1	77,386	58.3
19	83,368	58.1	69,312	49.7

Source: ABS customised data 1997

MEN AND BOYS PROJECT
UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

Appendix 5
Draft Guidelines for Involving Volunteers in Schools

DRAFT Policy and Guidelines for School Volunteers

MEN AND BOYS PROJECT, FAMILY ACTION CENTRE, THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

NOTE : This manual is being produced at a time (during late 1997) when males who wish to engage with children are being viewed, in the public domain, with extreme suspicion. This is particularly true in NSW where the Police Royal Commission became popularly known as the Paedophile Inquiry. But media reports of paedophile activity in the Foreign Affairs portfolio and of links between organised crime and paedophile activity have heightened public concerns everywhere in Australia.

In such an environment, advocating for adult males to be invited into schools to support students' learning must be done with care.

The guidelines suggested below attempt to allow school to encourage men into the school, but provide safety for all parties. Since this is a new area, these guidelines are very much a draft. In their development they have been shown to professional and community individuals and groups and have been adapted according to their responses. However it should be stressed that many commentators, while agreeing with parts of this document, or its intention, had reservations about some sections. Some commentators for example thought that the training offered to volunteers should be compulsory rather than optional. Others suggested that the focus on males in the guidelines was simply adding to an hysterical climate of fear about men.

These guidelines are a starting point. The intention is that schools will adapt them to their own situation and that, given enough discussion and communication between us, we will progress to a more acceptable, and useful set of guidelines in the future.

Introduction

Volunteers are an essential part of the school. Historically it has been the family members of students, most often mothers, who have sustained and extended school activities in a variety of areas. Recently, the important role of fathers in schools has been highlighted, particularly for the wellbeing of boys.

The involvement of all sectors of the community, including adult males (fathers, uncles, grandfathers, men from the community) with students to enhance their learning outcomes is in the best interests of the students, the staff, the school and the community. However, the recent highlighting of abusive activities by adults, in positions of responsibility, has left many parents and community members unsure of the trustworthiness of those interacting in one-to-one situations with children.

It is important to acknowledge these concerns while, at the same time, not allowing fear to prevent the vast majority of adult volunteers, male and female, from contributing to the school in an atmosphere of trust and co-operation. In order to promote the best practice of adult volunteers engaging with school children in their learning activities, guidelines are necessary which:

a) ensure the safety of the schoolchildren

b) reassure parents and community members that adequate precautions to prevent abuse are being taken

c) provide the volunteer with a framework to ensure that their interaction with schoolchildren is respectful and productive of good relationships within the school and the community

d) encourage all sectors of the community to contribute to the learning environment of the school

e) are widely understood in the community

Guidelines

- The principal of the school is responsible for supervision of volunteers
- A staff member is to be nominated as contact person. This individual is to be the first point of contact for volunteers accessing school premises and activities.
- Parental permission must be obtained on behalf of volunteers to allow children to travel or attend activities outside of the school with a volunteer.
- Volunteers are to be offered an orientation session where the issue of child abuse, and the content of this policy document, is discussed.
- Volunteers are to ensure that, when they with a pupil, other than their own child, that they remain in public view.

Appendix 6

Boys' Education Strategy 1995

This draft strategy was prepared as a submission to the 1994 NSW Government Inquiry into Boys' Education. It is reproduced here to give an indication of the areas to be developed.

BOYS' EDUCATION STRATEGY 1995?

This document has been prepared as a submission to the NSW Government Inquiry into Boys' Education 1994.

Inquiries: Richard Fletcher
Discipline of Paediatrics
University of Newcastle
NSW, 2308

INTRODUCTION

A BOYS' EDUCATION STRATEGY FOR NSW SCHOOLS

The argument offered here is that developing a strategy to improve the education of boys is neither difficult nor part of a backlash against girls' education strategies.

THE EXISTING FRAMEWORK

Feminists have made gains against enormous odds. A successful tactic in this struggle has been to develop the notion of equal rights, as equal outcomes. It is then possible to argue that if girls are not opting for engineering, for example, then it is not the girls' fault. This leads to searching for some external factor preventing an equal number of girls and boys not only taking up engineering, but succeeding in it.

To apply the same thinking to the boys seems, at first glance, inappropriate. The boys, as males, are the ones supposed to be 'on top'. The very idea of looking for ways to *increase* equality for boys seems to be a contradiction in terms.

But this apparent contradiction depends on a very narrow view of which outcomes are important.

Take the argument for increased options in subject choice. Advocates for special attention to girls have pointed to the low numbers of girls electing scientific or technology-related subjects. This lack, they see, reflects two factors:

a) girls, through their socialisation, are discouraged from selecting these subjects,

b) when they do attempt the subject, the teaching style and school atmosphere detract from their ability to achieve

As a result, the girls' life options will be unduly narrow.

A strategy is then proposed to revamp the teaching style and curriculum and to encourage girls to enrol (and succeed) in these subjects.

Boys however, are grossly under-represented in Home Science and Textiles and Design. If we applied the same assumptions of equal outcomes then we would argue that:

a) boys, through their socialisation, are discouraged from selecting these subjects,

b) when they do attempt the subject, the teaching style and school atmosphere detract from their ability to achieve

As a result, the boys' life options will be unduly narrow.

There are a number of possible objections at this point - the boys have other career options, the boys get more resources for technical subjects, the boys 'really' do not want to do Home Science, and so on.

These objections reflect important issues, and they have been effectively raised in education debates to prevent the serious consideration of positive policies for improving boys' education, but they miss an essential point. These objections to the question "what about the boys?" have been effective precisely because they fit in so well the prevailing narrow ethos in educational thinking. This approach values work over home, paid work over voluntary work, production over health and welfare, rationality over emotionality and, competition over cooperation.

The fact is that arguments against programs that encourage boys to do Home Science are unnecessary. School values are so pervasively conservative where boys are concerned that almost no-one even suggests such a program.[1]

This is not to argue that boys and girls are identically disadvantaged or simply mirror-images of each other. The traditionally favoured values have meant that boys have had unequal access to many types of benefits. The pay and career differences of men and women are substantial enough. A boys' program is not an argument against correcting the disadvantages suffered by girls. But the disadvantages that boys suffer in life, because of the way society (including education) encourages certain types of 'maleness', are also real and quantifiable.

In the area of health for example there is increasing recognition that men, in a number of ways, are significantly worse off than women. In Australia for every

age group, male death rates are higher than female death rates and many of these deaths are preventable. For major causes of death among young people such as motor vehicle accidents, the difference can be as high as 300% in favour of females (i.e. 300% more male deaths)[2]. Also, the growing acceptance of social and psychological factors in disease and ill-health has highlighted the poor health skills and attitudes of men and boys.

Boy's 'choices' are also indicated in crime statistics. Boys accounted for 85% of convictions In the NSW Children's Courts for 1991/92.[3] In every category, from Carrying Weapons to Fraud to Serious Driving offences boys vastly outnumber girls. The statistics of this disadvantage for boys compared to girls are well documented, but hardly recognised. This is unfortunate for both groups since in criminal behaviour in particular, the link between girls' and boys' interests is unmistakable.

There are some who would argue that the statistics showing an imbalance between males and females in prison is evidence of greater choice for boys - to run wild, to be aggressive and especially, to sexually assault females. But this view can hardly be sustained when the number of boys with head injuries, with lives scarred from assault or from prison are included.

To notice that boys' life choices are artificially narrowed will require an expanded sense of education. Dale Spender, a leading advocate for girl's education, has pointed out that the idea of a 'common curriculum' has meant teaching the same thing to boys and girls. "This however" she says, "does not take into account the fact that 95 per cent of what we teach relates to boy's experiences". [4] But which experiences?

Australia now has the highest rate of youth suicide in the industrialised world. This 'distinction' is entirely due to boys. It is the male suicide rate that has increased dramatically in the last 30 years. Female suicides, while individually equally tragic, have never approached the numbers of male suicides. In 1992, for example, 79 females under the age of 24 committed suicide, for males the figure was 383. [5]

The National Health and Medical Research Council report *BREAKING OUT: CHALLENGES IN ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH IN AUSTRALIA* identified 'the hard culture' as contributing to male youth suicide rates. The report named three aspects that render the culture 'hard': racism, materialism and masculinism. Racism is well recognised as an impediment to successful

school outcomes and we have many programs and policies at present aimed at removing racism from the culture of schools. Materialism and the devaluing of anything feminine (masculism) however have so far not been recognised as a problem.

There are advantages to materialism. A secular style of culture can protect us from some forms of religious extremism. But combined with masculism, it can limit the options for boys thus directly contributing to their poor schooling outcomes. To be religious or spiritual is equated with being feminine. Similarly to be intellectual is to be feminine. Studies of schoolboy culture clearly show the contempt that 'swots' attract from 'real' boys. [6] Being intellectual is also linked with femininity because it is considered impractical. "Most Australians would prefer to be recognised as the inventors of stump-jump ploughs than as novelists or poets." [7] This 'practical' aspect of materialism is accurately reflected in the subject choices of boys. A reputation as a computer whiz may be allowed for a schoolboy but a literature, visual arts or language whiz? Ironically many non-sexist programs targeting girls have reinforced the idea that 'masculine' subjects are better. When teachers express concern that girls are not interested in physics, while ignoring boys' lack of interest in languages for example, a clear message is conveyed that physics is valuable while languages are not. Approaches are long overdue which address the effects of the masculinist, materialist culture on boys.

One common but unwarranted assumption that has impeded boys education is the view that a curriculum which focuses on 'getting a job' is in boys' interests. Is it really in boys interests *not* to balance family and community commitments with their work? Is it *really* in boys' interests *not* to value or develop relationship skills, listening skills or caring skills directed at themselves or others?

An important suggestion, made by critics of the current schooling system, is that educators pay attention to outcomes. The desirable features of a future society should first be identified and then the type of education found that is likely to achieve these features.

It seems safe to assume that an ideal society would include the development of men and women across the whole range of human interests and abilities. This would mean dispensing with the rigid role divisions separating men and women from each other and, in the case of men, from their families, from children and from other males.

WHAT WOULD SUCH AN EDUCATION STRATEGY LOOK LIKE?

What we already have, in documents like the NSW Education Departments' Girls' Education Strategy 1989, is a blueprint for improving girls' education. We can show, by paraphrasing the same document, what a blueprint for boys might look like. That is, by taking the girl's document for a template, we can begin to formulate an education strategy that is non-sexist but is also in boys' interests and resists the temptation to see boys simply as a problem for girls.

The key to converting a Girls' Education Strategy to one for boys is to recognise the value of interpersonal relationships, family life, community involvement, caring and cooperation in all our lives, including male lives. If we start from this view of males as fully human then some questions to be addressed in a boys' education strategy are readily identified:

> Why don't boys elect to do English, Biology, History, Legal Studies, Society and Culture, Languages, Home Science, Visual Arts and Music in the same numbers as girls?
>
> Why do boys leave high school at a greater rate than girls?
>
> Why do girls outperform boys in almost every subject apart from maths?
>
> Why don't boys read?
>
> Why are detention classes, suspensions, and disciplinary problems overwhelmingly a boys' problem?
>
> Why don't boys learn cooperatively?

The answers to these questions will of course not be found in any one document, or series of documents. They will be worked out through a complex process called social change. But policy documents can help innovations by framing a positive commitment to seek change at all levels of the system.

NOTES

1. In the August 1990 issue of the Gender Equity Newsletter it was suggested that boys be actively encouraged to enrol in Home Science which was in danger of being 'restructured'.

2. Australian Institute of Health & Welfare (1992) Australia's Health 1992.

3. NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. Criminal Courts Statistics 1992.

4. Quoted in the GEN Newsletter of the Gender Equity Network. Department of Employment and Training. Nov/Dec 1990

5. Australian Bureau of Statistics. 1992 Causes of Death Australia Cat. No. 3303.0

6. Connell R.W. *Cool Guys Swats and Wimps: The Interplay of Masculinity and Education* Oxford Review of Education 15,1989: 291-304.

7. McGrane T. and Patience A. *Masculinity: Implications for Adolescent Sexuality in Australia* 35-46 In: Men's Health The Forgotten Issue. Ausmed Publications 1993. Melbourne.

BOYS'
EDUCATION
STRATEGY
1995?

PREAMBLE

In the following pages a draft boy's education strategy is offered. It is based on the GIRLS' EDUCATION STRATEGY , NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, MARCH 1989, published by the NSW Department of School Education, which sets out a clear framework for addressing girls' needs. The boys strategy, while still in the early stages of development, is the result of three years of discussions among many teachers, parents and students.

Both strategies are presented here, page by page. This arrangement is to facilitate comparison between the two strategies and to highlight the considerable areas of overlap where exactly the same changes would assist boys and girls. The page by page sequence is also chosen to underline the complementarity of the boys' and girls' strategies by showing how policies for boys, while different to those of girls, would have the effect of assisting girls' educational outcomes.

GIRLS' EDUCATION STRATEGY

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The overall purpose of the Girls' Education Strategy is to improve the educational outcomes from schooling of girls. Improving outcomes from schooling for girls will increase their opportunities for further education, training and employment, their personal growth and development, and their capacity to participate as active citizens in the life of the Australian community.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

There are three specific objectives for the Girls' Education Strategy, which identify areas for improvement in the provision of schooling for girls:

(1) to increase the participation of girls at Years 10, 11 and 12 in scientific and technology-related subjects;

(2) to expand the range of career choices made by girls when they leave school at Years 10, 11 and 12;

(3) to provide more supportive and challenging learning environments for girls, K-12.

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BOYS' EDUCATION STRATEGY

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The overall purpose of the Boys' Education Strategy is to improve the educational outcomes from schooling of boys. Improving outcomes from schooling for boys will increase their opportunities for integrating family and work life, their personal growth and development, and their capacity to participate as active citizens in the life of the Australian community.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

There are three specific objectives for the Boys Education Strategy, which identify areas of improvement in the provision of schooling for boys:

(1) to increase the participation of boys at all levels in subjects with a non-technology focus and particularly in subjects involving care of self and others eg. home science, family courses, health;

(2) to expand the range of life choices made by boys when they leave school to include a balance between work commitments and relationships and family responsibilities;

(3) to provide more supportive and challenging learning environments for boys, K-12.

RATIONALE FOR A MAINSTREAM APPROACH

The three Departmental reviews relating to the education of girls completed in 1987/88 **(Non-Sexist Education Program Evaluation, Review of Single Sex Classes in Coeducational Schools and the Report of the Girls Technology Strategy Working Party)** indicate that despite eight years of a mandatory policy promoting equal opportunity there are still differential outcomes from schooling for girls in comparison to boys. These reviews confirm differences in outcome that have been documented at a national level by the research on sex and education conducted in Australia during the last decade.

In broad terms, differences in outcome of most economic and educational significance for girls with respect to future life options are:

· **their under-participation in scientific and technical subjects;**

· **the typically narrow range of options considered by them in making career choices;**

· **their lower levels of self-esteem which contribute to lower academic expectations and aspirations.**

Reasons for these differential outcomes are complex and multi-faceted so it is difficult to isolate a single cause. Accepting that social factors external to the school environment impact on girls' expectations and aspirations, the learning environment provided by the school can and should provide more support and offer greater challenge for girls as learners.

To achieve this girls and women are to be valued equally with boys and men, and the needs and interests of girls as well as boys are to be reflected in curriculum content, teaching approaches, classroom and school organisation practices.

The Departmental reviews indicate that most teachers and executives express commitment to equal opportunity but are unaware of specific curriculum and teaching strategies that would contribute to improved educational outcomes for girls. There is a need to build on this expressed commitment of teachers and executives by improving their level of understanding in these matters through staff development and consultancy mechanisms.

Evidence provided by the policy reviews indicates that parents expect schools to create learning environments which promote equal opportunities for all students girls as well as boys. This is too important an issue to be left as a peripheral concern that may or may not be dealt with by particular schools, regions or functional areas.

Providing a high quality and equitable education for girls is a mainstream professional responsibility for ~ll teachers and administrators.

RATIONALE FOR A BOYS' EDUCATION STRATEGY

The NSW Department of School Education has promoted equal opportunity in schooling for girls and boys for some years. For girls, the emphasis has shifted from encouraging girls through to Year 12 to preventing sexual harassment and providing a girl-friendly curriculum (including single sex classes in some subjects). For boys, we are just beginning to identify the ways current schooling practice is failing to provide for the needs of male students.

In broad terms, the most serious educational deficiencies for boys with respect to future life options are:

- **their under-participation in all subjects with a non-technology focus and the complete lack of subjects in some crucial areas eg. parenting;**
- **their failure to consider family, friendship and community aspects of preparing for a career;**
- **their dependency for self-esteem on traditional estimations of masculinity, such as sporting or fighting skills, superiority over females, and job status.**

Reasons for these differential outcomes are complex and multi-faceted so it is difficult to isolate a single cause. Accepting that social factors external to the school environment impact on boys' expectations and aspirations, the learning environment provided by the school can and should provide more support and offer greater challenge for boys as learners.

To achieve this, emotional and social development are to be valued equally with intellectual development and the needs of home and community as well as those of paid work are to be reflected in curriculum content, teaching approaches, classroom and school organisation practices.

The Department expects that most teachers and executives would express commitment to equal opportunity but they are unaware of specific curriculum and teaching strategies that would contribute to improved educational outcomes for boys. There is a need to build up this expressed commitment of teachers and executives by improving their level of understanding in these matters through staff development and consultancy mechanisms.

Evidence from a number of sources indicates that parents are concerned about the future well being of their sons and expect schools to create learning environments that promote human qualities in all students.

FINDINGS OF THE POLICY REVIEWS

The findings of the policy reviews indicate significant impediments to girls' schooling in relation to policy implementation, school practices, understanding of discrimination, subject/career choices, curriculum implementation and teaching practices.

NON-SEXIST EDUCATION (NSE) POLICY REVIEW

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

· A substantial number of teachers have not read or been introduced to the policy.

· Some 20% of principals reported no monitoring of discriminatory practices in school organisation and teaching programs.

· Only 15% of principals and 5% of teachers surveyed had attended inservice relating to education and equal opportunity.

· Awareness of the policy and its underlying principles among the parent community is low.

· In some schools NSE is given little or no attention and many staff reported no discussion of the policy in staff meetings or other school forums.

· A significant number of respondents, including senior officers, were unaware of the differences between educational issues for girls (NSE) and management issues in relation to the employment of women (EEO/Merit).

· Structures for supporting NSE at head office, regional and school levels are fragmented in membership, uncertain in their operation and frustrated in their achievement of policy goals.

FORMULATING A POLICY

Since there have been no explicit policies for boys, on the assumption that boys were doing well, it is necessary to indicate outcomes that could be used in evaluating boys' schooling.

OUTCOMES FOR BOYS - ACADEMIC

* 10% fewer boys complete Year 12 [1]
* 75% of school suspensions are boys [2]
* 60% of school counsellor referrals are boys [3]
* Nine times as many boys are in special classes for emotional and behavioural disturbance [2]
* Three times as many boys are in language or intensive reading classes [2]
* Boys do considerably worse in Basic Skills English tests at all ages [4]

OUTCOMES FOR BOYS - LIFE

* Boys die at twice the rate for girls from injuries [5]
* Juvenile males are nine times more likely to commit serious assaults [6]
* Young males suicide at five times the rate of girls [7]
* Boys are nine times more likely than girls to be convicted on a drugs charge [6]
* Young men are six times more likely to be killed at work, and seven times more likely than females to be permanently disabled [8]
* 97% of those who are HIV positive are males, 98% of deaths from AIDS are male [9]
* On any one day in Australia there are 1100 boys and 200 girls in custody [10]
* 100% of reported rapes are by males [6]

NON-SEXIST EDUCATION (NSE) POLICY REVIEW

SCHOOL PRACTICES

· About 20-25% of comments relating to perceived discriminatory practices in schools cited school organisation, including timetabling practices, as examples of such practices.

· In secondary schools, in general, teachers perceived that there were different rules for uniform and its enforcement for each sex.

· Case study observations suggest that de facto separate girls' and boys' areas occur in schools.

· Students and parents reported peer group pressures as influencing sex-stereotyping in subject choices.

· Specific action (reported by 35~0% of teachers) to widen girls' choices generally focused on changing career choices rather than changing curriculum content to make it more inclusive of, and relevant to, the needs and interests of girls.

· Parents and students perceive that differential discipline occurs with punishment being more 'heavy handed' for boys and girls expected to be 'lady like'.

· School leadership roles are becoming less stereotyped but all male executives remain common, particularly in secondary schools.

· Half of the teachers surveyed had examined teaching resources to minimise sex bias.

· 40% of primary (year 6) and 60-65% of secondary students (year 9 and year 11) reported that teachers sometimes make 'sexist' comments.

· Students perceived that boys were given heavier and dirtier jobs and girls more organisational and catering tasks.

UNDERSTANDING OF DISCRIMINATION

· 50% of secondary personnel and 30-40% of primary personnel stated they were aware of discriminatory practices which required attention.

· Many respondents noted teachers had different expectations for girls and boys and that these differences are apparent in their teaching and treatment of students.

· Many teachers were particularly concerned with the discriminatory attitudes and behaviour of male staff, often citing the behaviour of individual males in their school.

· Many principals indicated that community attitudes exert a strong influence on school practices.

FORMULATING A POLICY

SCHOOL PRACTICES

Many school practices contribute to the poorer outcomes for boys. In spite of stated commitments to develop students as 'active citizens in the life of the Australian community' schools have focused on schooling as preparation for employment, (and even this has been narrowly conceived as the recent Mayer Report indicates). The emphasis on labour market outcomes has meant an overemphasis on technology-based curricula and a school focus on Tertiary Entrance Scores. Little attention has been paid to social skills.

* Schools provide few non stereotypical role models for boys.

* Males are frequently over represented in positions of authority and discipline, and under represented in roles emphasising nurturance and support (welfare, canteen, cleaning, teaching aids, counselling)

* In many schools the male staff's ability to be forceful or even intimidating is the basis of the school's authority.

* Sports and physical education are taught within a competitive framework emphasising peak performance rather than enjoyment.

* Teachers with a non-disciplinary responsibility for boys are virtually unknown.

* Discipline which challenges boys' disruptive behaviour without blaming individual boys is not common.

* Schools are not successful at engaging fathers and other males from the community in boys' education.

TEACHING PRACTICES

Schools have failed to identify the connection between boys' difficulties and 'growing up male'. Instead boys' academic and social disadvantages are treated as if maleness was incidental. It is not surprising then that the widespread concern for boys' lack of achievement in our schools has not come especially from the male staff but from classroom teachers of both sexes and parents.

Two major resources that could be drawn on to develop comprehensive boys' strategies have to date been unrecognised. The first is the male staff already in schools. Male teachers are numerous, particularly in high schools, they have, by virtue of their upbringing, a wealth of experience in 'maleness' issues. To plan to

NON-SEXIST EDUCATION (NSE) POLICY REVIEW

· About half of the senior officers surveyed reported they observed discriminatory practices, particularly the 'sexist' language of teachers.

· About 10% of all comments made by respondents noted the lack of female role models for both boys and girls.

· Positive changes noted by respondents were the increased confidence of women and the recognition of sex-based harassment as a legitimate issue.

· 20-30% of comments from school personnel and education officers related to negative changes such as staff antagonism, defensiveness and hostility.

· 10-15% of respondents made hostile or uninformed comments--these comments were more likely to be made by male teachers, executives of either sex and teachers of either sex in country regions.

· The general feeling of senior officers with functional responsibilities was that 'the policy is publicly but not privately accepted.'

· 25% of teachers and 45% of regional officers indicated that attitude change has been limited and tokenistic--the policy was seen as 'lacking teeth' since there are no formal accountability mechanisms in place.

SUBJECT/ CAREER CHOICES

· Sex differences in occupational choice were apparent in Year 6 and Year 9 students, but less apparent in Year 12 students.

· Sex-differences in career aspirations were evident among parents with more concern being expressed about sons' careers.

· Some parents also saw some jobs as unsuitable for girls in terms of physical capabilities or isolation.

· Retention rates to Year 12 for girls are higher than for boys (consistent trend since 1977) but staying at school longer does not necessarily benefit girls in terms of continuing education and access to employment because of their typical subject choice patterns.

· Boys dominate in enrolment in industrial arts (92%) and girls in home science (78%) and textiles and design (92%) (1986 HSC data).

· Girls continue to under-participate in higher level mathematics and physics courses (1979-1986 data).

FORMULATING A POLICY

reduce boys' poor schooling outcomes without the involvement of the male staff is to ignore the importance of the hidden curriculum in the schooling process.

A second resource is the vast body of knowledge and practical experience accrued by feminist teachers, theorists and educators. These women (and many men) have successfully argued that gender is a set of social practices built onto a biological sex type of male or female, and not a direct product of genetics. And they have a wealth of experience in attempting to include gender awareness in education settings.

However it would be simplistic to argue either that boys are discriminated against just like girls, or that feminists were equipped (or willing) to answer all the problems of boys' education.

Male and female teachers in schools have important but different roles to play in improving boys education. All teachers have a responsibility to address the serious life outcomes facing boys in their care. Male teachers however cannot avoid the fact that they are role models for their pupils. They are important sources of learning about adults for girls but they clearly have a unique responsibility to the boys. Male teachers particularly must address the question of "What sort of men do we wish to encourage in our society?" and then examine their educational practices, in and out of the classroom, to match the reality of their modelling with this ideal.

SUBJECT/CAREER CHOICES

It is a major concern of this strategy that boys subject choice is so narrow. Boys are under represented in English, Biology, History, Legal Studies, Society and Culture, Languages, Home Science, Visual Arts and Music. But this is simply a reflection of the narrow, paid-work focus of the curriculum and of many schools.

The recent push for a girl-friendly curriculum implies that the existing offerings are boy-friendly. This is not true and we can expect that addressing boy-shy subjects will just as complex as encouraging girls into maths and physics has proved to be. Attempting to entice boys into history through The History Of Warfare would be just as inappropriate as offering Kitchen Physics to girls.

SINGLE SEX CLASSES IN CO-EDUCATIONAL SCHOOLS REVIEW

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

· There is a high incidence of single sex classes which is unexamined and is inconsistent with the NSE policy due to such factors as individual student choice, timetabling practices, and the constraints imposed by grading or enrolment patterns.

SCHOOL PRACTICES

· There is a low incidence of single sex classes operating as a deliberate strategy for affirmative purposes and it is unlikely that the incidence will increase.

· These classes were introduced because of the perception of a need for affirmative action in the education of girls--rationales include raising girls' self-esteem, achieving higher levels of participation of girls in mathematics and science, and reducing sex-based harassment.

· Well-managed the single sex strategy has some beneficial effects, particularly but not exclusively for girls effects include improved confidence levels of girls, better access to equipment including computers, increased diligence and/or achievement with the accompanying potential to broaden choices.

· Features of a well-managed strategy include an holistic approach to countering discrimination, an articulate rationale, adequate time allowed for goals to be achieved, provision of staff development, commitment to effecting change, effective leadership from the principal and monitoring of the impact of the strategy.

· Success of the strategy is independent of the specific subject areas involved.

SINGLE SEX CLASSES IN CO-EDUCATIONAL SCHOOLS - A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY FOR BOYS

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

· Single sex classes and single sex schools have a long history in NSW. The difference between recent suggestions for girl-only classes and the policies of the 1960's is that girls in todays classes are to be taught with a special awareness of girls' needs. Girls are to be challenged to venture opinions in class in a supportive atmosphere free from harassment by boys. Exactly the same understanding of special needs however is appropriate for boys. Boy-boy harassment which is thought to be 'natural' for boys needs to be challenged from both ends. Aggressively competitive boys and those intimidated require constructive confrontation to improve classroom outcomes. Single sex classes of boys provide an ideal venue for this process.

SCHOOL PRACTICES

· There are few single sex classes operating as a deliberate strategy for improving boys' learning environments.

· Well-managed the single sex strategy has the potential to benefit boys. Improved classroom management practices which do not privilege aggressive competition for teacher time and which offer boys the chance to develop co-operative learning strategies will benefit both boys and girls - effects include improved confidence levels, enhanced student-student support leading to fairer access to equipment, increased diligence and/or achievement with the accompanying potential to broaden choices.

· Single sex classes may be the appropriate venue for boys to evaluate their learning goals and behaviours in a way which questions the 'natural male' competitive learning style.

· Features of a well-managed strategy include an holistic approach to boys schooling outcomes, an articulate rationale, adequate time allowed for goals to be achieved, provision of staff development, commitment to effecting change, effective leadership from the principal and monitoring of the impact of the strategy.

GIRLS TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY REVIEW

SCHOOL PRACTICES

· School timetables are inherently conservative with teachers often marketing particular subjects, and pre-emptive patterns being common for elective lines which reduces the opportunity to provide girls with a full range of curriculum choices.

· In cases of over enrolment for technology-based courses boys tend to be given priority and the few girls making the initial choice tend to drop out.

· Few teachers advise girls of the long term consequences of inappropriate or stereotyped patterns of subject choice.

· Some girls drop out of technology-based subjects because they experience isolation and alienation.

· There are relatively few female role models as teachers and less as executives in mathematics, science, industrial arts and computer education.

· Within school staffing allocations and rooming arrangements are often inequitable limiting girls' access to laboratories, workshops and practical 'hands on' activities.

· The physical environment of some laboratories/workshops appears as a 'male domain' and is unattractive to girls.

· Girls tend to have less prior experience than boys in using tools and equipment and the provision of compensatory experiences is not common.

CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Issues such as sex bias in curriculum content, sex-stereotyping in patterns of curriculum choice, the lack of supportive learning environments for girls, the 'maleness' of laboratories/workshops and the lack of female role models are complex matters which are interrelated and cannot be solved without sustained action at school and system level.

· The majority of syllabus documents in science, mathematics, and industrial arts do not reflect equally the lives, values, cultures and interests of girls and boys.

· There are no support documents which provide teachers with assistance in how to design teaching units in these subjects to motivate girls.

· Many of the present curriculum documents do not present technology as a human endeavour nor do these indicate the relationships between science, technology and society.

· Syllabus committees often do not have members with experience and expertise in girls' education.

IMPROVING BOYS' SOCIAL OUTCOMES

SCHOOL PRACTICES

- School practices such as according technology-based subjects higher status and greater resources reduce the choices for boys.
- Little encouragement is given to boys to undertake care-based courses and some boys making the initial choice drop out.
- Teachers and career advisers do not advise boys of the long term consequences of exclusively work-based subject choice.
- Male role models offering a range of possibilities to boys are not provided.
- The school environment appears as a `female domain' and is unattractive to adult males who are not teachers.
- Boys tend to have less prior experience than girls in using a variety of interpersonal skills and the provision of compensatory experiences is not common.

CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Issues such as sex bias in curriculum content, sex-stereotyping in patterns of curriculum choice, the lack of supportive learning environments for boys, the aggressive male behaviour style found in disciplinary structures and the lack of a range of male role models are complex matters which are interrelated and cannot be solved without sustained action at school and system level.

· The majority of syllabus documents do not reflect equally the human aspects of boys lives, values, cultures and interests.

· There are no support documents which provide teachers with assistance in how to design teaching units to motivate boys in a way which does not reinforce stereotypes.

· There are no support documents which address boys lack of interest in non-technical subjects as they are currently taught.

· Many of the present curriculum documents do not present technology as a human endeavour nor do these indicate the relationships between science, technology and society.

GIRLS TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY REVIEW

· The language of textbooks is often discriminatory and the images and roles portrayed are often sex-stereotyped.

· Restricting assessment to objective-type questions may disadvantage girls because research indicates that they perform better in non-objective tests.

· Boys tend to see science, mathematics and industrial arts as more suitable for males and girls tend to perceive these subjects as difficult, boring and as less relevant to their lives.

· Too much abstraction is introduced, too soon, in the content of science and mathematics and often far too much meaningless symbol manipulation is presented as important, which tends to 'turn girls off'.

· The teaching and learning approaches implied in the older industrial arts syllabuses emphasise a 'handy man' role which impedes the equal participation of girls.

· None of the current industrial arts syllabus materials mention girls as students or acknowledge contributions of women in relation to technology.

· Common starting points are often assumed which disadvantages girls who, in general, have had less prior experience with tools, equipment and the manipulation of spatial concepts.

TEACHING PRACTICES

· Teachers tend to under-estimate girls' ability to perform in science, mathematics, industrial arts and computer education so girls may be exposed to teaching styles that favour boys.

· Teachers are unaware, in general, that self-esteem is an important factor affecting girls' participation and achievement.

· Teachers tend to speak less to girls than boys and ask girls fewer high level cognitive questions.

· Teachers perceive that they do not have sufficient support to assist them in broadening their repertoire of teaching methodologies and in reflecting on their practices.

· Whole class teaching methodologies are frequently used in science, mathematics, industrial arts and computer education classes which tend to disadvantage girls.

· Teachers are often unaware of the reasons for different levels of motivation and interest in science, mathematics, industrial arts and computer education, that may be displayed by girls and boys.

IMPROVING BOYS' SOCIAL OUTCOMES

· Syllabus committees often do not have members with specific experience and expertise in non-traditional boys' education.

· The language of textbooks is often discriminatory and the images and roles portrayed are often sex-stereotyped.

· Restricting assessment to essay-type questions may disadvantage boys because research indicates that they perform better in objective-type tests.

· Boys tend to see English, Biology, History, Legal Studies, Society and Culture, Languages, Home Science, Visual Arts and Music as more suitable for females and boys tend to perceive these subjects as low status subjects which are boring and less relevant to their lives than subjects such as physics and maths.

· Exactly how to teach the traditionally 'female' subjects in a way which does not either 'turn boys off' or reinforce stereotypes (eg. home science as chef-in-training) has not been researched.

· The teaching and learning approaches implied in the older industrial arts syllabuses emphasise a 'handy man' role which reinforces the idea of men as uncreative but practical.

· Because the current industrial arts syllabus materials do not mention girls as students or acknowledge contributions of women in relation to technology, boys are given a false picture of the 'maleness' of these activities.

Common starting points are often assumed which disadvantages boys who, in general, have lower skill levels in co-operative learning and inter-personal relationships.

TEACHING PRACTICES

· Teachers tend to under-estimate boys' ability and interests in co-operative learning as well as 'female' subjects so boys may rarely be offered teaching styles that develop these capacities.

· Teachers are unaware, in general, that self-esteem is an important factor affecting boys' participation and achievement.

· Teachers are often uninterested in the reasons for different levels of motivation and interest in English, Biology, History, Legal Studies, Society and Culture, Languages, Home Science, Visual Arts and Music that may be displayed by girls and boys.

GIRLS TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY REVIEW

· Behaviour stereotyped as 'feminine' tends to be approved of and rewarded in girls, which encourages them in rote learning and rule-following rather than in experimentation, problem-solving and risk-taking.

· Boys sometimes show hostility and harassment towards girls in scientific and technical classes.

· Female primary teachers are not always confident in teaching mathematics or science.

· Teachers tend to give little evaluative feedback to students and do little to counter girls' poor self-image in scientific and technical subjects.

IMPROVING BOYS' SOCIAL OUTCOMES

· Behaviour stereotyped as 'masculine' tends to be approved of and rewarded in boys, which encourages them in disruptive, aggressive behaviour rather than in co-operative problem-solving.

· Boys sometimes show hostility and harassment towards unconventional boys.

· Teachers tend to give little evaluative feedback to students and do little to counter boys' poor self-image in interpersonal skills.

A NOTE ON SELF ESTEEM

Self esteem has been a prominent part of the justification for attention to girls' schooling since the 1970's. While the resulting improvements for girls are to be welcomed, the constant repetition that 'girls have lower self esteem than boys' needs to be queried for two reasons. The idea that boys as a group have higher self esteem supports the fiction that schools are serving boys well and that only other groups need attention. A second reason is that the supposedly lower self esteem of girls is not supported by the evidence. A recent review of the self-esteem issue by two leading feminist academics, made these important points:

> **Earlier interpretations of self esteem surveys were mistaken. Extensive research over a number of years has provided no convincing evidence for girls having a self esteem deficit.**
>
> **The idea that 'the more self esteem the better' is simplistic and unhelpful. Very low self esteem is clearly harmful but only about 10% of female students are in this group. Having students achieve within an optimum range may be a better goal than maximising self esteem scores. Indeed, boys may have a self esteem problem because more of them have unrealistic and exaggerated self perceptions.**[11]

POLICY STATEMENT ON THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS

Consistent with the findings of the policy reviews, the Department of Education has developed a new Policy Statement on the Education of Girls, which replaces the Non-Sexist Education Policy issued to schools in 1980. This new policy focuses more explicitly on action to improve educational outcomes from schooling for girls.

The Policy Statement sets out mandatory principles, which from 1989 are to inform action at school and system level. The Policy Statement also sets out levels of responsibility for implementation and accountability.

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POLICY STATEMENT ON THE EDUCATION OF BOYS

Consistent with the findings of the research on schooling outcomes currently available, the Department of School Education has developed a new Policy Statement on the Education of Boys, to complement the Girls Education Strategy issued to schools in 1989. This new policy focuses more explicitly on action to improve educational outcomes from schooling for boys.

The Policy Statement sets out mandatory principles, which from 1995 are to inform action at school and system level. The Policy Statement also sets out levels of responsibility for implementation and accountability.

POLICY STATEMENT ON THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS

PRINCIPLES TO INFORM ACTION

-- Ensuring that there is no discrimination based on a person's sex, whether the person is a student or an employee of the Department of Education, is a Government priority.

-- Educating both girls and boys for satisfying, responsible and productive living in a technological society, including work inside and outside the home, is an economic and social imperative.

-- Schooling is to be based on the understanding that sex is not a determinant of capacity to learn so girls and boys, women and men, are to be valued equally in all aspects of school organisation and administration.

-- Providing for equality of opportunity and equitable outcomes in education is a fundamental purpose of schooling, and will sometimes require differential provision for girls or boys, in the short term.

-- Providing a high quality education for girls and boys requires that schools set standards of excellence and offer challenging learning environments which are supportive and free from harassment.

-- Schooling as an aspect of society is to reflect the entitlement of all persons, including girls and women, in their own right, to personal respect, to economic independence and to participation in and influence over decisions which affect their lives.

-- Providing a high quality and equitable education for girls is a mainstream professional responsibility for all ancillary staff, teachers, executives and administrators at school, regional and head office level.

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-- Providing a high quality education for girls and boys requires that schools set standards of excellence and offer challenging learning environments which are supportive and free from harassment.

-- Schooling as an aspect of society is to reflect the entitlement of all persons, including boys and men, in their own right, to personal respect, to a caring environment and to participation in and influence over decisions which affect their lives.

-- Providing a high quality and equitable education for boys is a mainstream professional responsibility for all ancillary staff, teachers, executives and administrators at school, regional and head office level.

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POLICY STATEMENT ON THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS

GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

SCHOOL LEVEL

-- All schools are to be organised and are to allocate the resources provided to them so that the educational needs and capacities of girls and boys are catered for equally.

-- All schools are to ensure that the curriculum choices offered to students do not discriminate against girls or boys, and that accurate career information is provided to girls, in particular, about the long term economic consequences of inappropriate and stereotyped choices.

-- All schools are to raise awareness among their staff of the changing role and status of women and the specific educational and welfare needs of girls, taking into account that girls are not a homogeneous group.

-- All schools are to encourage girls to make career and life choices that reflect their needs, interests and abilities so that more women are employed in scientific and technical fields.

-- All schools are to inform their communities of the educational needs and rights of girls and are to involve them in strategies to improve the quality of educational outcomes for girls.

-- All schools are to establish links with their communities, including employer groups, to enhance opportunities for girls and boys to gain knowledge and understanding of the world of work, particularly in scientific and technical fields.

-- In the context of their general plans to improve the quality of education they offer, all schools in consultation with their communities are to develop action plans, reviewed annually, for improving educational outcomes for girls.

-- All schools are to incorporate in these action plans monitoring of classroom practices, including practical lessons, to ensure that equal time is given to girls and that discipline procedures are fair and equitable.

-- Responsibility to ensure that there are no discriminatory practices in the educational program and school organisation rests with the Principal who will report on action taken on an annual basis.

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-- All schools are to raise awareness among their staff of the changing role and status of women and men and the specific educational and welfare needs of boys, taking into account that boys are not a homogeneous group.

-- All schools are to encourage boys to make career and life choices that reflect their needs, interests and abilities so that more men are able to lead satisfying lives.

-- All schools are to inform their communities of the educational needs, responsibilities and rights of boys and are to involve them in strategies to improve the quality of educational outcomes for boys.

-- All schools are to establish links with their communities, including care-based agencies, to enhance opportunities for boys to gain knowledge and understanding of the often unpaid and unrecognised services which are central to community well being.

-- In the context of their general plans to improve the quality of education they offer, all schools in consultation with their communities are to develop action plans, reviewed annually, for improving educational outcomes for boys.

-- All schools are to recognise that fathers, brothers, uncles, etc. are an important human resource for boys' education and that creative ways to gain their involvement in the school need to be developed.

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POLICY STATEMENT ON THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS

GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

SYSTEM LEVEL

-- Responsibility for providing policy advice in relation to the education of girls rests with the Chief Education Officer (Girls) who will provide input to relevant policy advisory groups but be attached to the Studies Directorate.

-- Responsibility for providing curriculum advice about the educational needs of girls rests with the Director, Studies who will ensure that curriculum planning and design documents acknowledge the contribution of women to society and reflect the needs and interests of girls.

-- Responsibility for providing teachers and administrators with staff development in relation to the education of girls rests with the Director, Services and Director, Administration who will ensure that provision is made for this, on a needs basis, in the annual Staff Development Program.

-- Responsibility for ensuring that there are no discriminatory practices in regions and functional directorates rests with the Director, who will establish priorities for action and report on these through the relevant Assistant Director-General, in the context of the annual report.

-- Responsibility for ensuring that there are no discriminatory practices in the Department as a whole and for the overall improvement of the education of girls rests with Senior Executive and will be monitored by the Director-General through the establishment of reporting mechanisms and assessment of a range of indicators including participation and student welfare data.

POLICY STATEMENT ON THE EDUCATION OF BOYS

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MAINSTREAM ACTION PLANS

To meet the Government commitment to equal opportunity in education three mainstream action plans will be put in place in 1989:

· ENCOURAGING GIRLS INTO TECHNOLOGY;

· EXPANDING GIRLS' CAREER OPTIONS;

· SUPPORTING GIRLS AS LEARNERS.

These plans have been developed by the Department of Education to address the findings of the policy reviews. Each plan will focus on one of the objectives of the Girls' Education Strategy but aspects of each objective can be achieved through any of the plans. The plans contain strategies which will occur at school, regional and system level.

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- EXPANDING BOYS' LIFE OPTIONS;
- SUPPORTING BOYS AS LEARNERS.

These plans have been developed by the Department of School Education to address the findings of the research reviews. Each plan will focus on one of the objectives of the Boys' Education Strategy but aspects of each objective can be achieved through any of the plans. The plans contain strategies which will occur at school, regional and system level.

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ENCOURAGING GIRLS INTO TECHNOLOGY

SCHOOL ACTION

-- Each region will nominate pilot schools to develop Girls into Technology Programs to improve the participation of girls in scientific and technical subjects. Primary schools, central, SSP and secondary schools can be involved. Seeding grants will be available on a needs basis.

-- Each secondary school with a leading teacher appointment will be encouraged to participate as pilot schools. In addition, any school identified as a centre of excellence in technical areas or as a technology high school will be assisted to establish innovative programs to increase the retention and participation of girls in technology -related subjects.

-- Each of the newly established selective high schools and the senior high school, St Marys, will also develop Girls into Technology Programs as part of their curriculum organisation.

-- The pilot schools will commence the programs in 1989 and these experiences will be monitored to determine action for 1990.

REGIONAL ACTION

-- Each region will nominate an Inspector of Schools to encourage the development of the programs in the pilot schools and to produce or provide access to appropriate resources, including personnel.

-- Each region will identify an existing consultant with responsibility for promoting quality teaching in technology-related subjects to monitor and support the Girls into Technology Programs in schools.

-- The regions will monitor the participation and achievement of girls in science, mathematics, computer education and industrial arts by establishing and maintaining a longitudinal, regional data base, including SC, HSC, basic skills testing results (Years 3, 6 and 10) and information about the participation of girls and women in computer education.

-- One of the existing computer education consultants in each of the regions will have a specific brief to improve access for girls to computer education.

-- Each region will conduct staff development activities for computer education and a component of these will include information about the needs of girls in computer education using an existing staff development module on girls and computers .

ENCOURAGING BOYS INTO NON-TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRAMS

SCHOOL ACTION

-- Each region will nominate pilot schools to develop Boys into Non-technological Programs to improve the performance of boys in social subjects. Primary schools, central, SSP and secondary schools can be involved. Seeding grants will be available on a needs basis.

-- The pilot schools will commence the programs in 1995 and these experiences will be monitored to determine action for 1996.

REGIONAL ACTION

-- Each region will nominate an Inspector of Schools to encourage the development of the programs in the pilot schools and to produce or provide access to appropriate resources, including personnel.

-- The regions will monitor the participation and achievement of boys in English, Biology, History, Legal Studies, Society and Culture, Languages, Home Science, Visual Arts and Music by establishing and maintaining a longitudinal, regional data base, including SC, HSC, basic skills testing results (Years 3, 6 and 10).

-- One of the existing education consultants in each of the regions will have a specific brief to improve access for boys to Care-based Programs.

-- Each region will conduct staff development activities for Care-based Programs and a component of these will include information about the needs of boys.

ENCOURAGING GIRLS INTO TECHNOLOGY

SYSTEM ACTION

-- The Department of Education will act on the recommendations of the Girls Technology Strategy (GTS) Working Party Report, which was released in January, 1989.

-- A staff development initiative consistent with the recommendations of the GTS report will be co-ordinated by a girls and technology consultant who will be appointed to the Services Directorate to produce resource material targeted in 1989 at head teachers of science, mathematics, industrial arts and computer co-ordinators in secondary schools. In addition, this consultant will develop material for input into all training courses for careers advisers.

-- The 1989 staff development program will contain as one of the priorities, "Girls and Technology" and courses will be available for relevant teachers and executives in regions.

-- A curriculum initiative will complement the staff development initiative. An existing consultant with expertise in primary science within the Studies Directorate will contribute to the evaluation of K-12 science, including an examination of the competence and confidence of primary teachers, particularly women, to teach science. The consultant will also provide support for the Girls into Technology Programs in primary schools.

-- The Statutory Board Directorate will ensure that all SC and HSC participation and achievement data are identifiable by sex.

-- The existing Girls and Computers consultant at the Computer Education Unit, Services Directorate, will develop support material focussed on improving girls' access to computers for use by regional consultants.

-- The Encouraging Girls into Technology Action Plan will be linked to the Expanding Career Options Action Plan through co-ordination and reporting mechanisms which will be established by a Girls and Technology Task Force chaired by an Assistant Director-General.

ENCOURAGING BOYS INTO NON-TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRAMS

SYSTEM ACTION

-- A staff development initiative consistent with this report will be co-ordinated by a boys' education consultant who will be appointed to the Services Directorate to produce resource material targeted in 1995 at head teachers of English, Biology, History, Legal Studies, Society and Culture, Languages, Home Science, Visual Arts and Music and student welfare co-ordinators in secondary schools. In addition, this consultant will develop material for input into all training courses for careers advisers.

-- The 1995 staff development program will contain as one of the priorities, "Boys Needs" and courses will be available for relevant teachers and executives in regions.

A NOTE ON PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Increasing attempts to involve members of the community in their local schools is a world wide trend and has recently been nominated as a specific priority for NSW schools. A boys' education strategy provides this aim with a specific focus - to achieve the involvement of adult males in the nurturing aspects of schooling. Traditionally, men have been involved in their schools through working bees or on committees. More recently businessmen have been targeted for inclusion in school activities. For improving boys' schooling, this stereotyping of males as only useful for building, bossing and business needs to be challenged. Men need to be seen to be involved in activities which reflect the full range of human capacities inherent in males.

Fathers are the obvious candidates but uncles, brothers, stepfathers, grandfathers, etc are also potential recruits. To effectively involve men will mean creatively seeking to engage the nurturing aspects of men as they are rather than seeking to make the men into clones of women. Examples do exist of schools where men are involved in a variety of roles but it unlikely that any one approach will suit all schools. A commitment to seriously recruiting men in a variety of roles can however be included in the adoption of a Boys' Education Strategy.

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EXPANDING GIRLS' CAREER OPTIONS

SCHOOL LEVEL

-- Career education is a developmental process that needs to begin in primary school if students, particularly girls, are to be capable of making informed career choices at school, and when they leave school. Primary schools will be encouraged to undertake career education activities to promote vocational awareness in students within the broad learning area, Human Society and its Environment.

-- All central and secondary schools will continue to provide career education programs and the careers advisers and executives responsible for developing the programs will ensure that these are consistent with the principles set out in the Policy Statement on the Education of Girls.

-- Any school undertaking a Girls into Technology Program will be required to build in a career education component.

REGIONAL LEVEL

-- The existing regional consultants or contact persons for careers/work experience/ business links will broaden the career options of girls by promoting regional level action to achieve this such as, incorporating 'women in trades' segments in careers markets, using female role models with scientific and technical backgrounds in business/industry seminars or promoting awareness in girls of the range of technical courses available in TAFE.

-- Links with business/industry and joint secondary schools/TAFE courses are to be promoted and expanded and within each of these programs there will be an emphasis on providing equal access for girls.

-- Regions are to collect data on work experience placements by sex and work experience programs providing non-traditional experiences for girls are to be offered in some regions on a pilot basis in 1989 . These pilot work experience programs are to be linked to the Girls into Technology Programs in schools.

-- Regions involved in the Staying On Program are to monitor the retention and career choice patterns of girls in the participating schools. This information is to be used to implement strategies for broadening girls' career options in these schools.

EXPANDING BOYS' LIFE OPTIONS

There are two senses in which boys life options are narrow. As measured by motor vehicle accidents and suicides boys have unnecessarily high rates of early death and disability. Boys also have a far higher chance of being incarcerated in prison than girls. More general measures of well-being, such as alcoholism, involvement in illegal drugs, or being a perpetrator of violence find boys to be many more times at risk than girls. Schools have a clear responsibility to consider these 'options' when planning their activities. To expand boys' life options in these areas may well require changes in whole school practices in the areas of welfare, administration and discipline so that a school atmosphere conducive to boys' needs is generated.

The second sense of constraint on boys' options is in the choices of subjects which are offered. Conventionally boys have technology-based subjects as their first priority and chose lower levels of other subjects. In addition, some learning areas important for boys, for example Parenting Skills or Social Skills, are not offered in schools. Expanding boys' options in these areas will require curriculum development and support.

Both of there senses are evident in the school's approach to Career Education.

SCHOOL LEVEL

-- Career education is to be seen as preparation for balancing work, family and community responsibilities. It is a developmental process that needs to begin in primary school if students, particularly boys, are to be capable of making informed career choices at school, and when they leave school. Primary schools will be encouraged to undertake career education activities to promote vocational awareness in students within the broad learning area, Human Society and its Environment.

-- Careers advisers and executives responsible for developing career education programs will ensure that these are consistent with the principles set out in the Policy Statement on the Education of Boys.

REGIONAL LEVEL

-- The existing regional consultants or contact persons for careers/work experience/ business links will broaden the life options of boys by promoting regional level action to achieve this such as, incorporating 'community agencies' segments in careers markets, using male role models with care-based backgrounds in business/industry seminars or promoting awareness in boys of the range of activities they will be involved in which do not fit traditional notions of 'work'.

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EXPANDING GIRLS' CAREER OPTIONS

SYSTEM LEVEL

-- The existing career education consultants in the Studies Directorate will produce a resource booklet containing curriculum ideas for career education programs that promote equal opportunities and strategies for girls to broaden their career options. This material will be made available to the regional consultants who will encourage schools to incorporate and adapt the strategies suggested into their career education programs.

-- The Computer Education Unit in conjunction with the Careers Unit, Studies Directorate will establish a trial program to monitor in selected secondary schools the use by students of available software such as "Job and Course Explorer" for exploration and manipulation of career information. Regional computer and careers consultants are to co-operate in the implementation of the trial.

-- The Computer Education Unit will produce curriculum support material, including teachers' notes to supplement any software identified as being valuable for use by students, particularly girls, in relation to career exploration.

-- The Chief Education Officer (Girls) will monitor the policy implications of school, regional and curriculum initiatives to promote career education and expand the career options of girls. This officer will ensure that cross-functional and mainstream support is maintained for the program by chairing a reference group for liaison purposes.

-- Discussion will continue with industry representatives to encourage more firms to follow the lead taken recently by Comalco Smelting who offered scholarships to young women in 1989 to enter scientific and technology-related tertiary courses (engineering, physics, chemistry or mathematics).

EXPANDING BOYS' LIFE OPTIONS

-- Links with community agencies and joint secondary schools/TAFE courses in care-based courses are to be promoted and expanded and within each of these programs there will be an emphasis on providing courses appropriate for boys.

-- Regions are to collect data on community experience placements by sex and work experience programs providing non-traditional experiences for boys are to be offered in some regions on a pilot basis in 1995 . These pilot work experience programs are to be linked to the Care-based Programs in schools.

-- Regions involved in the Staying On Program are to monitor the retention and career choice patterns of boys in the participating schools. This information is to be used to implement strategies for broadening boys' life options in these schools.

SYSTEM LEVEL

-- The existing career education consultants in the Studies Directorate will produce a resource booklet containing curriculum ideas for career education programs that promote equal opportunities and strategies for boys to broaden their life options. This material will be made available to the regional consultants who will encourage schools to incorporate and adapt the strategies suggested into their career education programs.

-- The Computer Education Unit in conjunction with the Careers Unit, Studies Directorate will oversee the development of software that explores careers in the context of family and community life.

-- The Chief Education Officer (Boys) will monitor the policy implications of school, regional and curriculum initiatives to promote career education and expand the life options of boys. This officer will ensure that cross-functional and mainstream support is maintained for the program by chairing a reference group for liaison purposes.

-- Discussion will continue with community representatives to encourage firms to follow the lead taken recently by Comalco Smelting who offered scholarships to young women, by seeking scholarships for young men to enter care-based courses.(child care, nursing, occupational therapy).

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SUPPORTING GIRLS AS LEARNERS

-- This action plan aims to provide all girls with supportive and challenging learning environments. Supporting girls as learners requires that teaching approaches and school organisation practices, including timetabling practices, are based on the assumption that sex is not a determinant of learning.

-- A supportive learning environment at the school level is one in which girls feel safe and protected. Such a learning environment also values girls and encourages them to express their needs and interests.

-- A challenging learning environment for girls is one in which the curriculum content that is presented to them contains examples of the contributions of women to society, science and technology, and reflects the life experiences of girls equally with those of boys. A challenging learning environment can be developed only when all students, girls and boys have high self-esteem and feel motivated to learn. An important factor contributing to girls' self-esteem is their level of physical fitness, this being determined by their participation in physical activity, including sport.

SCHOOL ACTION

-- All schools are to include in their student welfare policy explicit action designed to promote the self-esteem and well being of girls and to provide them with a network of support so that their learning environments, in class and out of class are safe, protective and challenging. School student welfare programs are to address the common needs of all students as well as focusing on the different needs of girls and boys.

-- The Head Teacher (Girls) and Supervisor of Girls are to have a key role in coordinating and supporting whole school student welfare programs that incorporate mechanisms to address the specific needs of girls, such as access to adequate toilet and sanitary facilities, sporting equipment, playground space, laboratory and technology-related learning spaces. These executives are to be involved also in the decision making which occurs in developing the school timetable so that the curriculum choices offered to girls are equitable and do not reflect stereotyped assumptions that tend to result in pre-emptive elective patterns of choice.

-- A conference for metropolitan based Head Teacher (Girls) and Supervisor of Girls will be held during 1989 to inservice these executives about strategies to implement in schools to provide supportive learning environments for all students, including girls.

SUPPORTING BOYS AS LEARNERS

-- This action plan aims to provide all boys with supportive and challenging learning environments. Supporting boys as learners requires that teaching approaches and school organisation practices, including discipline practices, are based on the assumption that sex is not a determinant of behaviour. This means that interpreting violent behaviour as 'boyish enthusiasm' is not acceptable. Equally, the avoidance by boys of learning in the humanities, debating, drama or social activities of the school are not to be seen as 'natural' and acceptable.

-- A supportive learning environment at the school level is one in which boys feel valued and safe in exploring new areas.

-- A challenging learning environment for boys is one in which the curriculum content that is presented to them contains examples of the contributions of women to society, science and technology, and reflects the whole range of life experiences of boys and men. A challenging learning environment can be developed only when all students, girls and boys have high self-esteem and feel motivated to learn. Two important factors contributing to boys' self-esteem are: their level of safety from physical and verbal assaults, (largely determined by the overall atmosphere of the school) and their having a variety of ways to 'succeed' as males.

SCHOOL ACTION

-- All schools are to include in their student welfare policy explicit action designed to promote the self-esteem and well being of boys and to provide them with a network of support so that their learning environments, in class and out of class are safe, protective and challenging. School student welfare programs are to address the common needs of all students as well as focusing on the different needs of girls and boys.

-- The Head Teacher (Boys) is to have a key role in coordinating and supporting whole school student welfare programs that incorporate mechanisms to address the specific needs of boys, such as adequate modelling of male behaviour and opportunities to explore relationships in a supportive environment.

-- A conference for metropolitan based Head Teacher (Boys) and other appropriate staff will be held during 1995 to inservice these executives about strategies to implement in schools to provide supportive learning environments for all students, including boys.

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SUPPORTING GIRLS AS LEARNERS

REGIONAL ACTION

-- The existing student welfare coordinators (SEO 2) in regions are to include in their brief the co-ordination of support mechanisms, including consultancy support, to address the welfare needs of girls.

-- Strategies to support student welfare are to remain a staff development priority, at the regional level, for 1989. Resource material relating to girls and self-esteem will be distributed to regional officers for inclusion in such staff development.

-- All existing curriculum consultants in regions are to be inserviced about the ways to ensure that the curricula developed in schools include the needs of girls. Checklists and guidelines already developed by the Studies Directorate are to be used as the basis for this inservice. The principal regional officer with responsibility for curriculum development will co-ordinate the inservice and promote curriculum frameworks, which fully address the needs of girls as well as boys, in the implementation activities undertaken by regional consultants.

SYSTEM ACTION

-- Secondary schools can continue to introduce single sex classes in approved subjects and in accordance with the guidelines stated in the memorandum issued to schools in September, 1987.

-- The Studies Directorate will establish a Curriculum Resource Collection containing subject specific curriculum ideas, research and policy material relating to sex and race in education for use by curriculum consultants.

-- A consultant position will be identified in the Studies Directorate to support the integration of across-curriculum policies in the curriculum, specifically the education of girls, multicultural and aboriginal education. A document will be written to provide programming guidelines for curriculum writers on how to integrate these policies in the curriculum.

-- The Studies Directorate will develop curriculum ideas to assist teachers to incorporate K-12 equal opportunity strategies into their teaching units and school programs, to support girls as learners.

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ACCOUNTABILITY

All schools will improve data collection, performance measurement, levels of accountability, strategic planning and mechanisms for allocating resources to ensure equitable outcomes for girls.

Principals are to develop action plans and report on these in the context of their annual report.

Monitoring will occur by the establishment of systemwide performance indicators to measure changes in time in respect of the three objectives.

In 1989 a performance indicator project will commence that will identify system-wide measures in relation to the education of girls such as participation data, student welfare and curriculum data.

Implementation of the Girls' Education Strategy will be monitored by a Departmental Task Force consisting of senior Ministry and Departmental officers.

ACCOUNTABILITY

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Of course to develop an education system which did meet boys' needs and did achieve our ideal society would require greater changes than are implied by this paraphrased document. There is the question of how to generate a push for change equivalent to the women's movement whose energy resulted in the Girls' Education Strategy being written and adopted.

My own view is that the process of change for boys' education will follow a different path from that of the girls. The 'Men's Movement', although a popular discussion point for the media, is not likely to replicate the development of the women's movement of the last 20 years. The recent attention to boys' needs has been the result of diverse groups of concerned individuals - parents, teachers of both sexes and boys themselves (by way of disruptive behaviour and self-harm).

The diversity of advocates for boys education is one difficulty. Another is the absence of an 'enemy'. For girls' advocates, the overarching concept that 'girls are oppressed' provided a powerful framework (girls as a disadvantaged group) for critically evaluating schools and schooling. In particular cases, for example in sex-based harassment, boys could be clearly identified as the source of the problem. For boys the idea that 'boys are oppressed' is not a useful framework. Searching for ways in which girls harass boys will not be useful in improving boys' education.

The boys strategy detailed in the preceding pages is based on a different approach. It is an approach that acknowledges the work of feminist teachers but which starts from the concern expressed ,often by mothers, that boys are simply not doing well. From this broad basis of concern, while there is no 'enemy' to rail against, the possibility for enlisting support is almost limitless. Improving the outcomes for boys from our schooling system is potentially of benefit to everyone in the community.

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1. Johnston S. *Retention Rates: More Than Just Counting Heads.* Deapartment of Education, Queensland, 1990.

2. Hunter Region figures for 1991. McMahon J. *Sex Imbalance in Students with Educational Needs.* Unpublished paper. (at the time of writing the author was a Cluster Director in NSW Department of School Education).

3. NSW Department of Education *School Counselling Service Program Evaluation. 1989* Unpublished report.

4. Australian Council for Educational Research *Basic Skills Testing Program Public Report 1991.*

5. Australian Bureau of Statistics. *1992 Causes of Death Australia Cat. No. 3303.0*

7. Harrison, J. Moller J. Dolinis, J. *Australian Injury Prevention Bulletin.* National Injury Surveillance Unit. 5, Feb 1994.

8. Fletcher, R. *Australian Men and Boys ... A Picture of Health?* University of Newcastle 1993.

9. *Australian HIV Surveillance Report* Jan. 1993 Vol.9 No.1

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Appendix 7

Testosterone Poisoning or Terminal Neglect? The Men's Health Issue

This paper was originally commissioned by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library Research Service. It was first published as: Fletcher R. *Testosterone poisoning or terminal neglect? The Men's Health Issue*. Parliamentary Research Service Research Paper, No 23 1995/96 Commonwealth of Australia.

Testosterone Poisoning or Terminal Neglect? The Men's Health Issue

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1996

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Men's Health has become an issue of concern for men and women in the community and for a significant number of health professionals. The figures on male death rates, illness and mental health reveal a pattern of poor health sufficient to justify special attention. However the longer term trends, which reveal a dramatic improvement in key areas of men's health, make it clear that drug dependency no "crisis" is occurring.

Over the last five years there has been a surge of activity in all states to "do something" about men's health which is perceived as poor. A range of health professionals ,many of them women and often front-line workers in low status jobs, have initiated health programs for men. General practitioners, male service clubs and Aboriginal organisations and drug companies have also advocated for attention to men. The diversity of support for men's health and its lack of a unifying ideology (the initiatives are not premised on men as oppressed) mark an important difference in the development of men's and women's health. Other assumptions about the similarities of men's and women's health which, while understandable, are mistaken are: that men are dissatisfied with their health care, that men's diseases have been starved of resources, that Men's Health Centres are required. Equally incorrect are the expressed views that men's health is a backlash against women's health and that men's health needs are already well met. The highly publicised 1990 "Proudfoot" case is described and the relevant arguments in determining health status and resource allocation and the social effects of the case are discussed.

One significant need for men is to be better informed. The interconnected clinical, economic and public health issues surrounding prostate cancer screening are examined to illustrate the developing need for men to be better informed in the whole area of health and health care.

There has been a parallel development of concern that boys are "not doing well" based on school and welfare considerations. This development provides an opportunity to work with the education and justice sectors to improve the social development of boys in ways which would improve their health outcomes. The Commonwealth role, in the short term, is satisfactorily outlined in the recently released Draft National Men's Health Policy. The longer term responsibilities of the Commonwealth will require fundamental changes in many, if not all of its health-related programs. To incorporate an awareness of male gender into health care planning will mean developing new health care approaches to meet the redefined needs of men and boys. A rationale for the personal involvement of male politicians and staff in this project is given.

INTRODUCTION

The mortality rate for males in any given age group is higher than that for females. Young men, for example are involved in more fatalities arising from accidents, suicides and drug dependency. Older men die from heart disease and many common cancers at higher rates than do women. There is however some good news in that, over the last few decades, male deaths from many of these conditions have declined substantially.

This paper is not a *male v female* study not is it a pitch for greater health resources for men at the expense of existing programs for women. The paper seeks to collect a number of points which are relevant to the emergence of a very important debate - the men's health issue.

In any event, comparisons based simply on the distribution of financial resources overlook the need to examine entrenched views such as whether men's poor health is biological, or whether men are socialised to ignore vital symptoms.

Some improvements in men's health have been obtained by increasing the awareness of a healthy life style. Further improvements can be expected from a more open discussion of issues such as prostate cancer and head injury.

There is also the need to expose the myth that men's health issue has been placed on the national agenda by a "men's health movement". Some of the key advocates for grater attention to this issue are women whose involvement has been generated by concern for close male relatives.

The release of a Draft National Men's Health Policy by the Commonwealth Government on 18 January 1996 is a welcome but belated recognition of the importance of this issue to the nation as a whole.

HOW IS MEN'S HEALTH?

The most recent national health survey (1989-1990), asked men to rate their health as poor, fair, good or excellent. Overall, 80.1% of men rated their health as good or excellent, a figure slightly higher than that for females (78.3%)[1]. While the limitations of self-reported health data are well known, it is clear that overall, men (as well as women) feel that they benefit from the generally high standard of health care and living conditions found in Australia.

Of course there are groups within the male population who do not enjoy good health. Younger men reported better health than older men with 10.6 % of men aged 18-24 rating their health as poor or fair compared to 43.8% of men aged 65 and over. Low income males in the 25-64 age group are more than twice as likely as high income males to report their health as fair or poor (27.5% compared to 10.2%). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations have made repeated claims for better health services and for remediation of social factors such as unemployment, discrimination and land use, which negatively impact their health. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men have a life expectancy 16-18 years less than non-indigenous men.

Recently, however, the evidence of male excess mortality and morbidity across the whole population has been accepted as requiring action on the basis that health services (including health promotion) should be addressed to those in need.

At the 1995 National Men's Health Conference, Mathers, from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, presented a summary of the health differentials between Australian males and females. He considered the standard markers of health status, mortality, morbidity, risk factors and health service utilisation.[2]

Mortality

From birth to 14 years boys have a death rate 35% higher than the age standardised[3] rate for girls. Boys predominate across all the major causes of death: complications of pregnancy and childbirth (30% higher), congenital abnormalities (11% higher), cot deaths (34% higher), respiratory disorders (45% higher) and injury (76% higher).

Young men have an overall death rate almost three times that of young women. Motor vehicle traffic accidents and suicide, the leading causes of death, were 3.2 times and 4.2 times higher respectively for males. Deaths due to drug dependence were 88% higher for males and cancer deaths were 59% higher.

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1 Australian Bureau of Statistics 1989-90 National Health Survey Lifestyle and Health Australia Catalogue No. 4366.0

2 Mathers C. Health differentials between Australian males and females: a statistical profile. Keynote address to the National Men's Health Conference 10,11 August 1995. Melbourne. These indicators, from mortality to health service utilisation, are the accepted sequence for comparing the health status of different groups. See for example the biennial health reports from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Mortality is listed first as the most objective indicator, objective in the sense that the fact that someone is dead, in most cases, is not in dispute. And while there is variation, doctors are legally bound to register a cause of death in each case. However reliance on mortality and morbidity data has been criticised by women's health advocates as ignoring women's (often ignored) health needs. See for example Redman S, Hennrikus DJ, Bowman JA, Sanson-Fisher RW. Assessing women's health needs. Med J Aust 1988;148:123-27. This issue is taken up in the section on the Proudfoot case below.

3 "Age standardised" means the raw numbers have been adjusted to allow for different numbers of males and females in each age group in the population.

The death rate for men of working age (25-64) is nearly double that for women. The only major cause of death where men do not have a higher rate is genitourinary system deaths which were 29% higher for women. Among the major causes of death were: coronary heart disease (253% higher), suicide (251% higher), lung cancer (220% higher), motor vehicle traffic accidents (170% higher), stroke (33% higher).

For older men, over 65 years, the death rate was 61% higher than the age-standardised rate for women. These men had higher rates for all major causes of death including the genitourinary system. Some major causes of death were: lung cancer (387% higher), suicide (286% higher), bronchitis/emphysema/asthma (196% higher), stomach cancer (139% higher).

Morbidity

For illness , the picture is more complex. In some areas males have higher rates, in others they seem to do considerably better than females.

Boys report significantly more serious chronic illness and recent illness than girls. Boys have more respiratory and mental illness whereas girls have more skin conditions. Working age men report fewer days of reduced activity and less use of health services than females. They also report fewer illnesses although the same level of serious chronic illness. Older males report higher rates for deafness (104% higher), bronchitis/emphysema (73% higher) back problems (55% higher), and heart disease (30% higher). For a range of illnesses, from headaches and varicose veins to arthritis and hypertension, women report up to 50% higher rates.

Risk factors

Working age and older men, according to self-report, have significantly higher rates than women of all the risk factors: smoking, risky drinking, overweight, high blood pressure, inactivity and high serum cholesterol.

Medical, hospital and other health consultations

Apart from the 0-4 year old group women and girls receive more medical services per capita than men and boys. Working age women report 40% more hospital episodes, 16% more outpatients visits, 24% more dental visits and 25% more other health professional visits than working age men. The gap in medical consultations and hospital use is widest in the adult years 15-54. This is partly due to reproductive related services for women.

Mental health

Until recently, the accepted view was that women had higher rates of mental illness than men. Recently it has been demonstrated that while adult women experience more anxiety, depression and eating disorders men experience more alcohol and drug abuse and antisocial behaviour. Among children, boys have higher rates of mental illness than girls, for adults this is reversed, so that the overall rates are similar. [4]

The good news

It is tempting to interpret the figures in the preceding sections as a "crisis" in the health status of men. But a consideration of trends reveals a dramatic improvement in a number of areas. Lung cancer deaths, the biggest cause of cancer death in men, have been declining since about 1980. As the proportion of men smoking continues to fall,

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[4] Jorm AF, ed. Men and mental health :reference document. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council, 1995.

deaths from this cancer are expected to decline even further. Male deaths from Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) have been falling since the 1960s. Heart attack deaths, the major contributor to CHD, are declining at an annual rate of 4% in men (compared to 2.7% in women). Stroke mortality is declining at about 4.5% for both sexes. Alcohol consumption continues to fall. Between 1989 and 1994 the number of standard drinks per day for men fell from 1.8 to 1.3 (still higher than women on 0.4 standard drinks per day). The proportion of men drinking at hazardous levels fell from 15% in 1989 to 9% in 1994. [5] An even more striking improvement has been demonstrated for road deaths. Between 1968 and 1992 the age-standardised death rate for males fell from about 45 per 100,000 population to about 15 per 100,000. [6]

So, is it biology?

The dramatic changes in deaths and illness over the last twenty years are one of the strongest arguments against ascribing men's poor health to biological factors. However, the idea that biological factors will eventually be discovered for all our bodily ills, given enough time and effort, is deeply entrenched in the discussions of health and illness in Australia. So it is hardly surprising that genes or testosterone are commonly invoked to explain men's health status. On a global scale, there is support for the biological weakness of males since for a variety of cultures, from all continents, males have higher death rates. As well, across species from nematodes to mammals, male longevity is inferior in almost every case. Of course important biological differences between the sexes are acknowledged in the medical literature. In relation to heart disease for example it is accepted that women's oestrogen levels pre-menopause have a protective effect while men's tendency to store fat around their waists instead of their hips, as women do, is now thought to partly explain men's higher rate of CHD. But, as indicated above, men are also more likely to smoke and drink, and to eat more fatty foods than women. Ian Ring, Head, Epidemiology and Health Information Branch, Queensland Health, summarised the relation between the biological and social explanations as:

> The picture I have in my mind of what has been happening over the last 50 years is one of biologically inferior males trapped by nature, social roles and cultural myths into patterns of behaviour that have had a particularly devastating impact on their health. The behaviours that they have selectively adopted have been those that are associated with the major causes of death and chronic illness in the 20th century and the health system has been largely ineffective in reducing these differentials and indeed has made inadequate attempts to do so.[7]

In the following sections, an approach to the issue of men's health is suggested which recognises that there are important biological differences between men and women but holds that these differences are irrelevant to our willingness to try to improve the health status of men as well as women. Equally important is the simultaneous recognition that while males have been the focus of much health research and health service resourcing, males have not benefited from this attention because "maleness" has been invisible to health planners and professionals.

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5 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Australian Health Indicators Bulletin, December 1994. No 2.

6 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Australia's Health 1994. Canberra: AGPS, 1994.

7 Ring I. Inequalities in health: the challenge for the nineties. The 1992 Elkington Oration. Brisbane: Epidemiology and Health Information Branch, Queensland Health, 1992.

WHO IS DOING WHAT IN MEN'S HEALTH?

Nurses and other health professionals have initiated community-based, male-specific programs which fall into two main areas: health awareness and domestic violence. Programs attempting to raise male awareness of health issues commonly include the following topics: stress, heart disease, cancer, exercise, smoking and diet. These programs are often short, sometimes just a single session, and have targeted local men or, more rarely, specific groups such as unemployed men. Few of these programs have been evaluated or documented and, since the courses tend to depend on the enthusiasm of the initiator, there is little development or linking between areas. Nevertheless, since the late 1980's, when these programs first appeared, they have proliferated across Australia. A National Men's Health Forum held in 1994 in Burnie, Tasmania using local resources attracted 120 participants from all states except the Northern Territory.

Courses for perpetrators of domestic violence are sometimes based in specialised domestic violence services but many are run thorough community health centres or welfare agencies. Their development has been controversial and, like the health awareness courses, evaluation and networking have proven difficult.[8]

Over the same period, general practitioners have become increasingly vocal in advocating attention to males' health needs. The June 1990 "Men's Health" edition of the Australian Family Physician journal asked "Men's Health - is there a problem?". By 1993 the second "Men's Health" issue described a new "medical entity" of men's health as "evolving from a pure concern with the distinctly male apparatus into a concern for the total person and how that person's belief systems and approach to the world are interacting with health and disease."[9] Subsequently male-specific general practices have opened in Sydney and Melbourne, Victorian General Practitioners have developed a "Being a Bloke" education kit for rural General Practitioners and clinics for men's sexual difficulties have been established in every major city.

Aboriginals have also identified "men's health" as a separate service delivery issue. In 1992, health workers and Aboriginal groups from the Pilbara region of Western Australia held a Men's Health Conference.[10] A year later, Aboriginal men representing all major groups across the Northern Territory met to demand attention to Aboriginal men's health needs. In some areas, Aboriginal men's health clinics have been initiated to parallel the existing women's health clinics run in isolated communities.

At the national level, campaigns using sophisticated marketing techniques have also been directed to "men's health". In the cancer area, Apex, a 'male' organisation, used a video and rubber 'practice testicles' to initiate discussion of testicular cancer in its branches across Australia during 1992-93 .[11] In 1993 Merck Sharp & Dohme (Australia) Pty. Ltd. set up the Prostate Disease Awareness Committee (P.D.A.C.) to

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8 Frances R. Programs for men who are violent in the home. Melbourne: Department of Criminology The University of Melbourne, 1994.

9 Clearihan L. Australian Family Physician 1993;22:1317.

10 Health Department of Western Australia. Men's health: a Pilbara review. Port Hedland: Health Department of Western Australia, 1992.

11 Webster P, Patterson M, Chin V, Sharp R. Testicular cancer self examination: report to the Apex foundation. Apex Foundation, 1992.

publicise the issue among men. (The issue of prostate disease is described in the case studies below).

Research conducted among Newcastle steelworkers in 1992 led to the development of a uniquely male-oriented weight loss course. Ten thousand men in Australia have now completed the basic six week course under the trade name Gutbusters, (pers. comm. Egger 1995). A recent evaluation study found significant waist reduction over 2 years.[12] Dietitians in community settings in several states have since begun similar male-specific weight loss courses under other names.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEN AS A LEGITIMATE TARGET GROUP

During the 1980s there were precursors to the "discovery" of men's health in the 1990s. At the South Australian conference, *Linking Men's Services* held in Noarlunga in 1986, research was reported showing men used community health services at only 50% the rate for women and a typology of male clients was suggested.[13] In Sydney, Thelma Robinson, director of the NSW Community Safety Division of the National Safety Council circulated her report *Being Male is A Safety Hazard* documenting the excess male deaths and hospitalisations from NSW figures. The Noarlunga conference findings had little effect outside of South Australia however and Thelma Robinson found her paper dismissed as "interesting". Neither event made headlines or stirred public interest.

Public discussion of men certainly took place in Australia during the 1980s. But the emphasis on men's psyche, rather than their physical health prevented major health developments for men from being recognised as "male" health issues. The new Occupational Health and Safety legislation and the Drug Offensive for example, initiatives of great benefit to men's health, were discussed as "workplace" or "community" issues.[14]

By contrast, the report *Men and Mental Health* released at the 1995 National Men's Health Conference, marks a break with the popular psychology approach to men's health since it considers the effects of war, stress and family breakdown within a public health framework rather than the individual therapy framework of the popular press.[15]

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12 Egger G, Bolton A, O'Neill M, Freeman D. Effectiveness of an abdominal obesity reduction program in men: The Gutbusters 'Waist Loss' Program Int J Obes (in press)

13 Linking Men's Services: a conference on men's issues and services in South Australia. 7th & 8th March 1986. Noarlunga Health Services.

14 The acceptance of "men as norm" in health research and service delivery is two-edged. It is now being recognised, with hindsight, that men are poorly served by a health system which assumes that male identity is irrelevant to health issues and that men and boys are doing fine. But equally important is the recognition, first argued by feminists but now accepted by mainstream researchers, that because males were taken as the norm, research, funding and treatment regimes were preferentially directed at males. The feminist critique of standard practice in medicine and health is voluminous. A recent (though US based) account is given by Nechas E,Foley D. Unequal Treatment.New YorK: Simon & Schuster, 1994 For an Australian summary article see Broom D. Masculine Medicine, Feminine Illness: gender and health In: Lupton GM, Najman JM, eds. Sociology of Health and Illness Melbourne: Macmillan, 1989. For mainstream concurrence see for example Petticrew M, McKee M, Jones J. Coronary artery surgery: are women discriminated against? B M J 1993; 306:1164-6 and on funding see Melbourne District Health Council. A sliver-not even a slice: a report of a study of expenditure on women and health research. Melbourne: Melbourne District Health Council, 1990

15 Jorm

An epidemiological, or public health perspective however does not ensure that men's health is recognised as an area of need. From the mid 1980s, in response to an international interest in the broad issues of health promotion, Australian government reports began to consider the issue of equity in the broad context of health status and wellbeing rather than the narrow treatment framework of hospital care and medical services. The report of the Better Health Commission, *Looking Forward to Better Health*, was published in 1986. It included proposals for achieving higher levels of equity in health in Australia but made no reference to males as a group.[16] Three years later the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council's Health Targets and Implementation (Health For All) Committee produced the *Health For All Australians* report. Three major areas of inequality were nominated - Aboriginality, socioeconomic status, and gender. For gender it noted:

> There are also quite remarkable gender differences in health status in this country. Men in Australia die from nearly all non-sex specific leading causes at much higher rates than do women, although women consult doctors more frequently for all causes except injuries. These differences in health status largely reflect the prevalence of preventable factors. [17]

But while the committee could point to the emerging new national plan for Aboriginal health, and the National Women's Health Policy being formulated, and the committee itself took action to develop health goals and strategies for older people and migrants, for men it simply noted:

> There have been no formal efforts to develop goals, targets or national strategies for the health of men in Australia...

This is surprising given the importance accorded mortality rates in evaluating health status. As professor Stephen Leeder, a leading public health advocate explained:

> ..when I consider which statistics have media and political impact, I can think of none more powerful. Excess mortality is a concept everyone can grasp. Our fierce Australian egalitarianism leads us immediately to conclude that something unfair is going on if one community group has a higher mortality than another.[18]

Two related, but separate ideas may explain the tolerance among health planners of the contradiction between death rates as a marker of health status, and their lack of action in targeting men.

A fundamental concern both of the original WHO health resolutions and the Australian reports and programs generated in response, was that health inequalities (i.e. health status differences) be reduced. Australian reports and programs embraced this goal, but made an important distinction between "inequality" and "inequity".

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16 Better Health Commission Looking forward to better health. Vol 1 Final report. Canberra: AGPS, 1986.

17 Health Targets and Implementation (Health for All) Committee to Australian Health Ministers 1988. Health for all Australians report to the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council and the Australian Health Ministers Conference Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1988.

18 Leeder S. Warning: death statistics can be a health hazard. Med J Aust 1991; 155:357-8.

In the European Region's response to the 1977 WHO resolution, from which Australian documents took much of their direction, the distinction is made between inequality as unfairness, termed inequity and inequality as "unequal in a purely mathematical sense". Inequalities which are not unfair may be due, for example to biological factors, or to "freely chosen" health damaging behaviour such as "participation in certain sports and pastimes."[19]

This distinction has provided, in the Australian context, a way of acknowledging that males have markedly poor health in some areas while continuing to overlook males as a suitable target group. In the Health For All Australians report for example, the question is presented "Why do women report more health problems yet live longer than men?" And then an answer is offered. "This paradox can be explained in terms of the differences in types of illnesses they report. The chronic conditions that men report are more likely to be those also causing high mortality." [20]

In practice, maintaining the boundary between behaviours which are "freely chosen" and those which are imposed is not straightforward. The European WHO document notes:

> Promotion of health-damaging products may be targeted at certain groups such as young working class men and alcohol advertising...This puts them under greater pressure than others to consume these products.[19]

Similarly confused attempts to separate inequity and inequality occur in Australian documents.[21] And some Australian commentators have been more dismissive of this distinction maintaining that "inequalities always have externally imposed, unfair causes" [22]

A second difficulty in targeting men, is the assumption that men's health is being taken care of (not an unreasonable assumption).[23] This view is not canvassed in national public health documents, but was made explicit in the recent charge that the Canberra Women's Health centre was unfairly discriminating against men (Proudfoot's case[24]). This case was heard before Justice Wilson in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in 1991 and 1992. The general features of the hearing are discussed later.

An important, though unintended, feature of this case was the public testimony of senior health bureaucrats. Dr Stephen Duckett, Director of Policy and Planning for the Health Department of Victoria gave evidence on behalf of the respondents (ie. women's health)

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19 Whitehead M. The concepts and principles of equity and health. Health Promotion International 1991;6:217-28.

20 Health Targets and Implementation (Health for All) Committee to Australian Health Ministers 1988. Health for all Australians report to the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council and the Australian Health Ministers Conference Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1988.

21 Commonwealth Department of Health, Housing and Community Services. Towards Health for All and Health Promotion. Canberra: AGPS, 1993.

22 Leeder S, Grosssman J. A din of inequity (editorial). Aust J Pub Health 1991;15:2-4.

23 Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs American Medical Association. Gender disparities in clinical decision making. JAMA 1991;266:559-62.

24 See page 13 in this document

about the general approach to planning services. On being asked if, in planning health services, men's needs were set beside women's needs and a judgement made, he replied:

> ...one would hope that existing services are meeting someone's needs and if they're not meeting women's needs they're presumably meeting men's needs.[25]

It is unusual for such background thinking to be on the public record but this assumption, if widely held by health planners, would help explain the invisibility of men's poor health for so long.

By 1993, the revised national health targets, set out in *Goals & Targets for Australia's Health in the Year 2000 and Beyond*, with minimal discussion of equity, included males as a priority target group in several categories, such as suicide, motor vehicle injury, skin cancer and heart disease.[26] The most recent *Better Health Outcomes for Australians (1994)*, breaking with the distinction between inequity and inequality altogether, included males as a priority population under the social justice category for injury.

In parallel with this increasing national recognition of males' needs, regions in Queensland and Western Australia, and Area Health Services in NSW have included males as a priority group. South Australia is planning a "Men's Health Policy" for release early in 1996.

At the national level, at the time of writing, a Draft National Men's Health Policy has recently been released. It identifies four action areas:

* a national education strategy for schools and community organisations
* an information strategy promulgating best practice in men's heath and developing benchmarks for assessing men's health initiatives
* research into men's health-related behaviours and men's needs and
* an extensive consultation process with men and male organisations.

THE MEN'S HEALTH MOVEMENT AND OTHER MYTHS

While there undoubtedly are parallels in the development of "men's health" and "women's health" (with a 20 year time lag), there are also important differences. The development of women's health as a separate health care issue has been grounded in women's public dissatisfaction with existing health care services.[27] The *National Women's Health Policy* report of 1989 acknowledged important precursors to the policy: the resurgence of the women's movement in Australia, the United Nations Decade for Women, the National Agenda for Women and the 1975 and 1985 national women's health conferences.[28] The situation for males is not comparable.

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25 Transcript of proceedings. Tuesday 4th February 1992. Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. Canberra: Auscript, 1992.

26 Nutbeam D, Wise M, Bauman A, Harris E, Leader S. Goals and targets for Australia's health in the year 2000 and beyond. Report prepared for the Commonwealth Department of Health, Housing & Community Services. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1993.

27 Yew L. Need JA. Women's health needs. Med J Aust 1988;148:110-2.

28 Commonwealth Department of Community Services and Health. National women's health policy. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1989.

A 1995 Morgan poll found that only 37% of the men questioned were concerned that men's health issues were not being properly addressed.[29] Males' satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with existing health care is rarely discussed in the medical literature. But there is no reason to assume a hidden dissatisfaction. A 1994 community survey of 400 Pilbara males found levels of satisfaction with health practitioners ranging from 82.3% for surgeons to 86.5% for general practitioners to 100% for chemists and nurses. [30]

The lack of sweeping dissatisfaction with existing health services should not be taken to suggest that men's health is simply a media fabrication without substance. The wide ranging programs described above have not been concocted by journalists. But the media portrayal of men's health activity, while certainly an important factor in public awareness of the issue, has portrayed this interest and activity in a stereotyped and inaccurate way.

One pervasive notion is that a "men's health movement" with connotations of aggrieved men demanding justice, is the driving force behind the appearance of men's health as a public issue. This is not an altogether unreasonable assumption since the development of women's health, did arise from second wave feminism. However it is an incorrect portrayal in the case of men's health.

In many community health centres, in hospitals, and in the bureaucracies it is females (often nurses) who have been advocating, investigating and promoting awareness of men's health issues. Given the predominance of females in health work this is not surprising. But the differences with the development of women's health should be noted. Many proponents of men's health have been long-standing advocates for women's health. It was the Kalgoorlie Women's Health Centre, for example who initiated the first men's health awareness night in that area. In South Australia it was a feminist researcher who first documented men's poor attendance at community health centres. In Newcastle it was a lecturer specialising in women's health who first introduced a men's health topic into nursing courses. It should also be noted that many men are very supportive of women's health services. The 1995 Morgan poll cited above found that 87% of the men surveyed were in favour of specific women's health services. This is not the situation portrayed by journalists looking for a "war of the sexes" story.

The recent cover story in *Time* magazine is a case in point. Although the *Time* journalist was advised when writing the article that women were important advocates and provided with examples of women who had initiated key men's health programs, the picture conveyed by the story was that it is men who are now taking action. A corollary of the conflation of the men's health issue with a men's health movement is that men's health and women's health are seen as mutually hostile and incompatible. So that any attention to men must be at the expense of women. This idea was reinforced in the *Time* story with a quote from Eva Cox, representing the feminist position: "the poor dears are getting worried about their balls and they want to be victims too".[31]

But the evidence from around Australia is clear on this point. It wasn't men who first "worried about their balls", it was the close female relatives of the men. The discovery

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29 Medical Benefits Fund of Australia. MBF Healthwatch Survey III - Men's Health Issues. Sydney: MBF, 1995.

30 Pilbara Public Health Unit Men's Health Project Report September 1994 Pilbara Public Health Unit 1994.

31 Smith R. The Weaker Sex, Time Australia December 12, 1994:56- 61.

of testicular cancer as a public issue came from a mother whose son was diagnosed with testicular cancer and became dangerously ill. When she looked around the Health Promotion Unit where she worked, there was not a single pamphlet on the topic. As her son recovered she lobbied for funds to develop a resource alerting men to the issue. The *Monkeys Check Theirs, Do You?* kit has since been distributed nationally through Apex. There are parallels in the UK. There it was a nurse whose partner had testicular cancer who advocated and lobbied for health promotion specifically targeted at young men.

Another common belief is that men's health claims should be modelled on the early development of women's health. It is often assumed for example that not only will men be the foremost advocates of men's health but that they will seek "men's health centres" along the lines of the alternative women's health centres of the 1970's. Where this has been attempted, as on the NSW Central Coast, it has not lead to the provision of new services but to conflict with existing service providers and disillusionment among supporters. The general practices which have been set up recently to offer specialist services to men have not been alternative in the sense of emphasising non- medical treatments.

IS THERE A BACKLASH? THE PROUDFOOT CASE

The fear of some women's health advocates, that the discovery of men's poor health status constitutes a thinly disguised grab for resources, is understandable.[32] Some of the publicity advocating men's health makes just this claim (as well as blaming feminists for men's plight). The February 1994 *Penthouse* article Men's Health Scandal led off

> Thirty years of feminism may have stressed the need fair an equal society, but female gains have been at the expense of Australian male health care. An old feminist slogan says: "We don't want a bigger slice of the cake - we want the whole damn bakery." In terms of health, women have taken "the whole damn bakery" while men enjoy the crumbs.[33]

A more formal argument against women-specific health services, with potentially more serious implications, was made by Dr Proudfoot, principal adviser to the Therapeutic Goods Administration of the Commonwealth Department of Health, Housing and Community Services. Dr Proudfoot, acting in a personal capacity, filed a complaint in 1990 in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission alleging that the Commonwealth and ACT governments funded projects which discriminated against men on the ground of sex and were therefore illegal, under Section 22 of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*. The projects, which came under the National Women's Health program included the consultations held by the ACT government into women's health needs, the ACT Women's Health Service (a clinical service for women) and The Canberra Women's Health Centre (a voluntary information, education and referral service for women). These services were, the complainants argued, discriminatory because men could not access them, because men's health was worse than women's and because the services addressed problems common to men and women. Gynaecological and reproductive services were not included in the complaint. The respondents argued

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32 Moore R. Targeting men's health - what does it mean for women's health? Healthsharing Women 1994; August September:5-6.

33 Norman J. Men's health scandal. Penthouse 1994; February:34-36,96,98.

that even if it was found that discrimination had occurred, the projects were lawful because of sections 32 and 33 of the act. Section 32 exempts services which, by their nature, can only be provided for one sex. Section 33 exempts any act designed to ensure that persons of one sex have equal opportunities with the other. By the time of the hearing before Sir Ronald Wilson, two other men had filed related complaints and all three were heard together. However it was Dr Proudfoot who provided the substance of the arguments.

Two features stand out from the transcript of the hearing. Not only were the complainants ill prepared, but they were arguing against women's health rather than for men's health. The exchanges recorded in the transcript are marked by their futile negativity. The complainants did attempt to show that Australian men had worse health than women, relying heavily on evidence of higher mortality of Australian men, but they were not advocating equivalent men-specific health services. Their aim was to dismantle the existing women's health services, so that no case was made as to how men's health might be improved, save the suggestion for redistributing funds from women-specific to general health services. Since women-specific services account for only 1% of the total health budget, this was a weak argument, even assuming that the case for men's needs being greater than women's could be made.

The question caricatured in the Proudfoot case - how to decide which group has better health status - is relevant to a variety of health resource debates. However the considerable literature on measures which incorporate life quality (e.g. Quality of Life Year or QUALY), rather than simply years of life, include criticism of fundamental aspects of their construction and use. For disease specific outcomes there is some agreement but deciding between quality of life outcomes for different diseases has proved infeasible. Unfortunately this is precisely the area pertaining to men's versus women's health. What is required is some way to establish a preference between, say, 'x' years with arthritis, a condition common among women, and losing 'y' years due to premature cardiovascular death, or living 'z' years with severe brain damage, the statistically common situation for men.

A major difficulty is in deciding who to ask to indicate a preference. Are those who suffer from the condition in the best position to decide? Is it professionals with a range of experience? Or those who may know someone who might suffer from it? The method chosen for estimating preferences in this case might well have profound effects on the outcome.[34]

In summing up Justice Wilson dismissed all the complaints. He held that the consultation initiatives to identify women's needs were not unlawful and that the Women's Health Service and the Women's Health Centre were protected by sections 32 and 33 of the Act respectively.

He also noted :

> Notwithstanding the mortality and morbidity statistics, women were significantly disadvantaged in their personal well-being and hence in their health. There were many socio-economic pressures - poverty, child care, single parenthood, lower wages, domestic violence, sexual violence, depression, drug

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[34] This is a brief summary of an enthusiastic debate with direct policy implications. See for example Packwood B. Oregon's bold idea Acad Med 1990:632-3. A more pragmatic measure than QALY's is the DALY. It still has problems but see The World Bank. World development report 1993: investing in health New York Oxford University Press, 1993.

addiction etc - quite apart from child bearing and menopause which impact on the health of a significant number of women in Australia. Their situation warranted special measures.

Effects of the case

One effect was to generate a "backlash" tag for those advocating for attention to men's health. While there are small pockets of supporters for this approach - attacking women's health in the name of men's health - the vast majority of those pursuing "men's health", as argued above, come from a more positive framework. [35]

As a reasoned consideration of the health needs of men and women, the case was a poor model. By their application to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, the complainants marked their hostility to women's health as more important than their advocacy of men's health. As Justice Wilson noted in passing, "It would be a strange way of meeting the unmet health needs of one sex to dismantle the services already provided to meet the health needs of the other sex".

To their credit, advocates for women's health have, for the most part, not used the Proudfoot case as an excuse for ignoring the self-evident health needs of men. A co-operative approach is emerging which recognises the value to women's health of having men's gender acknowledged as an important consideration in health care debates.[36]

PROSTATE CANCER SCREENING AND MEN'S HEALTH - A CASE STUDY

In 1990 a Cancer Council briefing on major cancers was conducted in Newcastle. After spending some time on Breast, Cervical and Skin Cancer the presenter came to the page in the flip chart headed "Prostate Cancer". The presenter glanced at the heading, then, as he flipped over the page, he joked "Well we all know about men and fingers don't we?" Everybody laughed and the presenter moved on.

In 1996 such cavalier treatment is unlikely. Prostate cancer has become part of the general health debate carried on in the community and through the media. Reports of the 1994 controversy over breast cancer funding for example highlighted two areas for comparison, AIDS and the "male" diseases, prostate and testicular cancer. While the AIDS lobby was cited as a precedent in politicising the health research process, prostate and testicular cancer were offered as the logical comparison for evaluating priorities and funding. This two way contest between breast and the "male" cancers was not simply media inventiveness. The then Minister of Health, Senator Richardson, in responding to criticism over breast cancer funding said it was tragic that 2600 women died annually of breast cancer but 2300 men died each year of testicular and prostate cancer. He also said that breast cancer research received $1.5 million annually, or 10% of the cancer

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35 The People's Equality Network in Victoria and some "men's rights" organisations in Western Australia seem to be taking this line.

36 Dorothy Broom, who testified for the respondents in the Proudfoot case has recently been proposing a new approach to men's health for women's health advocates. See Broom D. Rethinking gender and drugs. Drug and alcohol review 1995; 14:411-15.

research budget, and the male diseases received about $300,000 but the media did not focus on the male disorders because they were not "fashionable".[37]

In lobbying terms, prostate cancer is poised to become fashionable. The statistics on death and risk are easily conveyed and the differences in research funding for breast cancer and prostate cancer appear stark. On the other hand, the reasons for lack of screening are not easily sloganised. A recent *Lancet* article pointed out that, compared to breast cancer, we know little about the natural history of prostate cancer, the adequacy of the screening tests or the efficacy of early treatment. The author concluded that even to commence a trial of prostate cancer screening would be unethical at this stage, and called for open discussion of the issues.[38] Letters to the Lancet in response revealed disagreements among medical experts and researchers over the measurement of survival rates, the evidence of testing efficacy, the ability of clinicians to identify potentially harmless cancers, and the statistical models used in previous studies.

The complexity of the arguments and the lack of consensus surrounding prostate cancer screening preclude a straightforward response to suggestions for aggressive strategies for detection. At the same time, a number of recent developments in Australia make the climate for championing prostate cancer particularly auspicious.

The perception that men in Australian society are in crisis seems to be common among media workers. This means that health issues framed as "male issues" are likely to receive considerable coverage. In addition, a well resourced Prostate Disease Awareness Committee has been set up with a grant from Merck Sharp & Dohme (Australia). The American parent company, which sponsors similar groups in other countries, manufactures Proscar (Finasteride) a prostate shrinking drug used in the treatment of Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) . This condition is an enlargement of the prostate and is very common in men over 50. The committee, which is managed by Edelman Medical Communications, includes representatives from the Australian Kidney Foundation, the Combined Pensioners and Superannuant's Association and the Returned Services League of NSW. It has broad educational aims and is preparing a video-based presentation on prostate disease to be shown by health workers to men across Australia. While the committee does not advocate screening for prostate cancer, (and Merck Sharp & Dohme (Australia) have no direct financial interest in PSA screening), their enthusiastic publicising of prostate disease inevitably raises the question of cancer. While 90 per cent of enlarged prostates might prove to be benign, men understandably wish to know if their prostate is one of the other 10 per cent.

What happens if prostatic diseases do become "fashionable"? One consequence, if the breast cancer foundation established in the May 1995 budget is a precedent, will be separate funding for prostate cancer research. This is likely to be opposed by medical researchers as replacing scientific merit with lobbying. However the research funding debate may be overshadowed by the problems, suggested above, which will be caused by an increase in the general awareness of prostate disease.

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37 Newcastle Herald 1994; February 22:3 But see note 14 above. In cancer as in every other health area it is men's diseases which have, overall, received more attention even though the funding was not tagged as "men's health".

38 Adami H, Baron JA, Rothman KJ. Ethics of prostate cancer screening trial. Lancet 1994;343:958-60.

Prostate screening tests

The use of screening tests for detecting cancer has been a major point of debate in the medical literature. As well as discussion of individual tests, there has been tension between mass screening of an asymptomatic population and case detection in asymptomatic patients seeking a health check. In the former, clear guidelines have been established to justify the expenditure of public money and to ensure that potential benefits outweigh the risks. In the clinical setting with individual patients, however, general practitioners or specialists may well operate on the basis that the earlier a cancer is found the better (and their patients may be convinced that "earlier is better" applies absolutely to all cancers). Recognising this dilemma, the *Medical Journal of Australia* published Australian Cancer Society guidelines for cancer-related health checks as a special supplement to the September 1985 edition.[39] At that time no methods of early detection for prostate cancer were recommended, due to lack of evidence. But since then pressure has been mounting to recommend mass screening for prostate, or at least to follow the American Cancer Society guidelines in recommending that annual Digital Rectal Examinations (DRE) be offered to men over 40 years requesting a health check.[40]

Other tests are available for detecting prostate cancer. Two of the most common are Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) and Trans Rectal Ultrasound (TRUS). But neither they, nor DRE, are particularly accurate. The Digital Rectal Examination for example, has a positive predictive value (the probability of disease in somebody with a positive test result) of only 0.17 to 31 percent.[41] This means that a high proportion of men thought initially to have cancer will, after further investigation, be found to be cancer free. Since a positive result at screening will require further investigation, and because it is difficult to predict which prostatic cancers will progress, finding the cancer may not benefit the patient. A decision analysis of treatment of men with asymptomatic prostatic nodules in general practice found that the men would be worse off if the prostatic nodule found on screening were evaluated and treated.[42] However DRE, which is cheap and non-invasive may be the least likely candidate for inappropriate use since social attitudes may inhibit widespread rectal examinations. The taking of a PSA blood test and the TRUS are likely to be more acceptable. Sladden and Dickinson have estimated that screening costs using these tests for the 1.5 million Australian men over 50 could be as high as $300 million dollars per year.[43] A figure, it should be noted which is 20 times the total existing cancer research budget.

Unfortunately, the potential conflict between a newly alerted public, wanting to know if they have cancer and a properly cautious scientific community will not be solved

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39 Fleming WB. The cancer-related health check-up. A guide for medical practitioners. Med J Aust 1985;143 (special. supplement)S33-S40.

40 American Cancer Society. Defining and updating the American Cancer Society guidelines for the cancer-related check up: prostate and endometrial cancers. CA 1993; 43:42-6.

41 Chodak GW, Schoenberg HW. Progress and problems in screening for carcinoma of the prostate. World J Surgery 1989;13: 60-4.

42 Mold JW, Holtgrave DR, Bisman RS, Marley DS, Wright RA, Spann SJ. The evaluation and treatment of men with asymptomatic prostate nodules in primary care: a decision analysis. J Family Pract 1992 ;34:561-68.

43 Sladden M, Dickinson J. Effectiveness of screening for prostate cancer. Aust Fam Phys 1993;22 :1385-92.

through researching the effectiveness of the tests. The scientific gold standard required in such cases is provided by randomised control trials. Such trials are underway but, of necessity, require many years to complete. The European trials, testing different combinations of screening, will not be complete until the year 2000.

In the past, health authorities have been able to contain the use of screening tests by issuing guidelines to GPs and refusing to sponsor government funded mass screening. But the context of public health debate has changed. As noted above, our health culture is now one where men's health is highly visible and where articulate groups are promoting prostate awareness to a receptive public. We can see a possible future in developments in the United States. There, the proportion of patients with newly diagnosed prostate cancer who had the PSA test rose from 5.8 percent in 1984 to 68.4 percent in 1990[44]. Increasingly however, the combination of political, consumer and commercial pressures is sidestepping the scientific community to encourage testing with DRE and PSA in men without symptoms. Senate Minority leader Bob Dole was diagnosed with prostate cancer and has recovered. He sponsors a touring Bob Dole Prostate Cancer Detection Unit staffed by volunteer urologists and physicians which screens up to 2000 men at each site.[45] Free screening is also provided at other sites across the United States during Prostate Cancer Awareness Week (PCAW). This week has become the largest cancer screening program in the United States. Since 1989 an estimated 2 million men had been screened. The December 1992 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post* contained a tear out Christmas present centrefold - a gift certificate for a PSA test from the doctor of your choice.

For those hoping that Australian health policy would never be prey to such folly the recent developments in breast cancer funding must provide food for thought. The Commonwealth decision to establish a breast cancer foundation, bypassing the established NH&MRC review process, was made in the face of opposition from the Australian Medical Association, the Royal Australian College of Physicians, the Australian Cancer Society and prominent researchers and clinicians, including those working in the breast cancer area.[46] The announcement of the funding was made at the same time that a national Breast Cancer Week was announced.

Although our health system is based on different principles, the possibility is that older men who are wealthy or in positions of influence (General Norman Schwartzkopf, who was treated for prostate cancer, served as national PCAW chairman in 1994) will be favourably disposed to suggestions for specific research into prostate cancer. When a Perth businessman was diagnosed with prostate cancer recently, he began, with the help of local urologists, to raise money for research into prostate cancer. Within three years they had raised over $3 million dollars purely from business associates.

But breast cancer may also provide a positive model. The revised health promotion guidelines for breast cancer suggest that skilled counsellors be provided to women to assist with the unravelling of a complex health decision process. This concept could be

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[44] Mettlin C, Jones GW, Murphy GP. Trends in prostate cancer care in the United States, 1974-1990: Observations from the patient care evaluation studies of the American College of surgeons commission on cancer. CA Cancer CLIN 1993; 43:83-91

[45] SerVass C. Men: don't sit on the problem Saturday Evening Post 1992; November/December :50 - 55,97-99.

[46] Ragg M. The Australian 22/4/1994:11

borrowed for men concerned with prostate disease. Where the breast cancer advice was to be offered in relation to treatment (and the treatment decisions for men are not exactly simple either) the notion could be extended to cover all aspects of screening. On a larger scale the provision of spokespersons to advocate on behalf men's health interests has not, to date, been seen as necessary. After all, most urologists are male. But without suggesting any inadequacy on the part of urologists, the idea that male medical specialists could speak on behalf of all Australian men flies in the face of current understanding of consumer rights. There are groups available. Apex and Rotary have been providing health education outside Cancer Council guidelines. They could be invited to join a co-operative educational approach to men. Male organisations, such as those represented on the prostate awareness committee, with little experience in health advocacy could be resourced and skilled to adequately represent men in health debates.

CONCERNS ABOUT BOYS

The title "Men's Health" should be taken to include males of all ages. For boys, there is a growing awareness that both academically and socially, they are lagging behind girls. In recent years at the NSW Higher School Certificate girls have outperformed boys overall as well as in five of the six Key Learning Areas (boys are doing better in just one - mathematics). Girls also out perform boys in literacy at every level. Boys on the other hand, excel at being suspended from school (male/female ratio, 3:1), being convicted of drink driving (7:1), being killed through injury (2:1), committing suicide (4:1), binge drinking (1.5:1) and being referred for emotional and behavioural disorders (10:1). [47]

NSW led the world when it initiated an parliamentary inquiry into boys' education. The publication of the government report[48], and the recent publication of *Boys in Schools*[49], documenting initiatives in boys education in four states, have focused on the connection between schooling and the construction of masculinity. By "construction" is meant the way boys build a male identity for themselves from what is offered by schools, parents and society. The discovery of boys' education as an issue is both separate from, and overlapping with, men's health. As an issue of public concern it has a different, though parallel history. Like men's health, boys' education was first flagged not by governments or by senior bureaucrats but by front line teachers and parents worried about their sons. Like men's health an initial reaction was to paint the expressions of concern for boys as a backlash, but the weight of public distress, and the common sense nature of the evidence that all is not well with boys, has meant that schools are actively rethinking their approach to boys and dragging their bureaucracies with them. [50]

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47 Fletcher RJ. Boys education strategy 1995? Newcastle: University of Newcastle, 1994.

48 NSW Government Advisory Committee on Education , Training and Tourism. Report on the inquiry into boys' education 1994.

49 Browns R, Fletcher R, eds. Boys in schools Sydney: Finch, 1995.

50 Just as in the men's health debate, the media instinctively reach for a battle-of-the-sexes metaphor in reporting boys' troubles. But as well, the schooling debate is skewed by an elitist concern with university entrance scores. School teachers and parents are particularly concerned with the majority of boys who will not be going to university, who lack of motivation to do just about anything, or who harass girls and attack eachother. Media reports however emphasise the tertiary entrance score differences, which, in any case, are minor compared to the differences between high and low socioeconomic groups or between indigenous and non-indigenous students.

THE TASK BEFORE US

The task for men's health is clearly different from that facing women in the 1970s. There is no widespread community anger to harness and replacing the few existing female health executives with males would not improve male health status. Rather, the understanding of men's health by those already in positions of influence needs to be addressed. Health planners and service providers have to be persuaded that men's health is not automatically superior, and that it merits closer attention. Men's organisations have to be resourced and encouraged to actively represent men and boys' views and interests. And men and boys have to be invited to join the dialogue on men's health, not simply by talking with professionals, but by talking with eachother.

THE ROLE OF THE COMMONWEALTH

At the time of writing the immediate steps to be taken by the Commonwealth have largely been taken. The Draft National Men's Health Policy was released on 18th January 1996. The four areas: education, information, research and consultation are the appropriate domains to be developing. It is also appropriate that the draft policy does not specify the precise topics for research, or the themes for educational development. The whole process, from staging a National Men's Health Conference to submitting a policy to the Australian Health Minister's Council in 1996 will have taken one year. This is in stark contrast to the 14 years between the first National Women's Health Conference and the National Women's Health Policy released in 1989.

Long term implications

An example of the shift in thinking implied by men's health was given at the first British men's health conference, Men's Health Matters, held in July, 1995 in London. Professor John Strang, Head of The Addiction Unit, The Maudsley Hospital, was asked to speak at the conference. Having agreed, he went to the data on heroin addicts, an area he had already analysed in terms of gender, but hitherto always looking for issues likely to affect females. He found, to his surprise, that the 2.5/1 male/female ratio in addicts was not due to a bias in male-oriented treatment provision as was commonly assumed. Heroin overdose deaths, time to treatment, arrests and hepatitis B rates all indicated a genuine male excess. Furthermore he found that the recent epidemic of heroin use in England was almost entirely related to males. The male to female rate, which had been steady at 2.5/1 for ten years was now 3.5/1. The possibility that this might be a peculiarly male epidemic had not been raised in the discussions he had attended. He then asked: "How could we have failed to spot this gender effect? Are we still failing to explore powerful gender-based protective factors?"

Revamping Commonwealth activities, in all likelihood, will begin with revelations such as this. Individuals working in drug abuse, workers compensation, road safety, welfare provision, housing, urban development, rural assistance, etc will begin advocating for attention to men. What will follow will involve research, some of it basic. Essentially research of a quite practical nature will be required because a fundamental aspect of recognising male gender in such services is recognising the need to engage men in a discussion about their needs. The general research question is "What structures and processes will help men to discuss their needs with each other in order to clarify what these are, and then, how can these needs be articulated into the design and delivery of appropriate services?" This question is already being posed in the most obvious health

area of prostate disease, as discussed above, but it equally applicable to Commonwealth activities which fall outside of the health portfolio but which impact on men's health.

A personal dimension for politicians and staff[51]

Like most men in Australia, male politicians and male staff reading this paper will not have been encouraged to think of "men's health" as personally relevant. Equally likely, male politicians and male senior staff will think of their health as fairly good, but perhaps with concern for symptoms of prostate enlargement, high stress levels and elevated risk factors for heart disease. They will also, statistically speaking, be likely to have had some personal experience of relationship breakdown, in the role of husband, son, father, etc. and to know someone affected by drug abuse and domestic violence. They will undoubtedly have some memories of risk taking as a younger man.

An important task for the Commonwealth will be to assist these men to bring their personal knowledges into the public arena in a way which validates the importance of men discussing health. This is not a call for public disclosures of personal information or for male politicians and other staff to be models of "sensitive new age guys" ("sensitive new age cowpersons" in rural areas). But it does suggest that males in leadership positions are not immune from the traps of social roles and cultural myths for males which Ian Ring described earlier.

In a variety of ways, through the development of men's health, Commonwealth programs will be asking men in the community to make changes. Men will be asked to make special efforts to resist harmful social pressures, including the pressure of what other men might think, and to re-evaluate the male identity they have developed which underpins their behaviours. It seems only fair to ask the designers and proponents of these programs to do the same.

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[51] Women are also complicit in the construction and reinforcement of cultural myths about males and masculinity, so female politicians and staff will have a role to play in developing a new Commonwealth culture which recognises male gender too. But many women will be already familiar with the notion of integrating their personal knowledge with their work-related knowledge and historically it has been women, rather than men, who have argued for gender to be a public issue. Experience in the community has shown that when a gender issue is addressed to "people" or "staff" the women readily respond while the men see it as a "women's issue". Finally, males predominate among politicians and senior staff, hence the address specifically to males.

Appendix 8

Boort Secondary College Boys' Education Action Plan

This strategy is included to give a specific example of the level of detailed planning which may be useful for schools wishing to address a number of aspects of boys' learning. It was produced by the school staff (Access & Equity Committee) of Boort Secondary College.

Boort Secondary College Boys' Education Action Plan

1. PRINCIPLES

1.1 Boys generally have lower academic achievement levels than girls.

1.2 Boys attain fewer Effort Awards than girls.

1.3 Boys have a higher rate of literacy problems than girls.

1.4 Boys outnumber girls in remedial and special assistance situations.

1.5 Boys have a lower rate of participation in extra-curricular activities other than sport.

1.6 Boys experience peer pressure not to perform academically.

1.7 Boys have a higher rate of problem behaviour and are more likely than girls to be referred for counselling.

1.8 Boys show a fear of exhibiting perceived 'feminine' qualities/'weaknesses', e.g. gentleness, sensitivity.

1.9 Boys are less capable of verbal and emotional expression.

1.10 Parental expectations of boys' academic achievement are often low, particularly at junior and middle school level.

1.11 There is a contrast in involvement in a child's education between male and female parents.

1.12 A perception exists amongst some students and parents that boys don't get 'A's.

1.13 Boys' behaviour is characterised more by competition than cooperation.

1.14 These principles are evident prior to students entering secondary schooling.

1.15 Gender participation rates across the curriculum have improved.

1.16 The Year 9 Boys Personal Development program currently addresses many of the principles.

2. PURPOSE

To develop strategies to enable and encourage boys to achieve their full potential, particularly in relation to academic achievement and social development.

3. OBJECTIVES

(Objectives are in priority order as determined by Access & Equity Committee. Numbers in brackets refer to related *principles* of the action plan.)

3.1 Improve boys' academic achievement. (1.1, 1.4)

3.2 Address boys' literacy problems. (1.3, 1.9)

3.3 Reduce incidences of problem behaviour. (1.7)

3.4 Encouraging assertive, responsible and independent behaviours. (1.6, 1.8, 1.9, 1.13)

3.5 Increase proportion of boys attaining effort awards. (1.2)

3.6 Develop links with the primary school to address issues of boys' education. (1.14)

3.7 Expand the Year 9 Boys and Girls Personal Development Programs. (1.16)

3.8 Develop programs to increase school community awareness of gender stereotyping and its effects. (1.11)

3.9 Increase participation of boys in extra-curricular activities. (1.5)

3.10 Increase fathers' involvement in their children's education. (1.11)

3.11 Promote high participation rates for boys in humanities and the Performing Arts. (1.15)

Objectifies for which strategies to be developed in 1996 - 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.7, 3.8

Objectifies for implementation in 1996 - 3.2, 3.3., 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
3.1 Improve boys' academic achievement	3.1.1 Assist boys to develop organisational skills by: (a) Identifying problems in organization (b) Formal teaching of skills (e.g. 'You Can Do It') (c) Reinforcing use of diaries and investigation of feasibility of improved diaries for student use (d) Providing facilities for student use e.g. stapler, photocopier, trimmer (e) Continue keyboarding program	SWC/FT Class teachers/FT/Sp Ass SWC AEC SOSE (Commerce)Co-ord	end 1996 - T1, 1997 T1-2, 1997 end 1996, ongoing ASAP	(a) Checklist for identification of organizational problems (b) Program implemented (c) Improved use of diaries reported (d) Facilities available to and used by students (e) Improved keyboarding skills
	3.1.2 Recognise exemplary achievement by: (a) Classroom or community display (b) Inclusion in newsletter/magazine (c) Highlighting at school assemblies	KLA Co-ords Class teachers		Recognition of student achievement includes more work by boys
	3.1.3 Promote use of criteria-referenced assessment and student self-assessment to avoid over-emphasis on quality of presentation	Curriculum Co-ord KLA Co-ords	1997	Criteria-referenced assessment widely used
	3.1.4 Sharing of ideas on teaching and learning approaches appropriate for boys and involvement of teams of staff in professional development activities (e.g. PETL)	PD Co-ord AEC	1997 & ongoing	Participation of professional development activities and a forum for sharing of ideas are planned and implemented
	3.1.5 Students be encouraged (across the curriculum) to use a variety of resources in assignments	KLA Co-ords Class teachers	Ongoing	Improvement in achievement levels in assignment work
	3.1.6 Emphasis be given, during curriculum development, to identifying and focusing on student interests	KLA Co-ords Class teachers	Ongoing	Increased student interest in learning reported
	3.1.7 Widespread use of positive role models	AEC KLA Co-ords Class teachers	Ongoing	More tolerant behaviour. Broader choices of subjects, work experience, career pathways etc.
	3.1.8 Planning for allocation of staffing and resources should include a component for provision of special assistance for students with learning difficulties. Special assistanc vision to take	Principal/VP LAC AEC	end 1996	Special assistance resources match needs increase in male staff involved in special

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OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
3.2 Address boys' literacy problems	3.2.1 Ensure English curriculum includes examination of the construction of gender, particularly in relation to literacy and language	English KLA Co-ord English teachers	Late 1997-Early 1998	English curriculum examines construction o gender where appropriate
	3.2.2 Increase acceptance of reading as a worthwhile and enjoyable experience by (a) Reading to primary students (b) Publishing student work in various forms	English KLA	T3, 1997	Level of student interest Student submission of work Student reading publications
	3.2.3 Conduct a 'Book Week'/'English Week', incorporating: (a) an author visit (b) 'Book Week' display and activities (c) Promotion of Yabba (Young Australian Best Book Award) (d) Men talking about reading	English Co-ord English Co-ord English teachers book retailers English Co-ord & staff English KLA	TBA T2-3, 1997 Apr-Nov, 1997	Favourable student response to visit High level of student involvement
	3.2.4 Purchase and promote suitable books	English Co-ord, AEC	T2-3, 1997	Library monitoring or responses of boys to books used in class or USSR
	3.2.5 Improve effectiveness of USSR by: (a) providing each room with a range of suitable reading material (b) improving student awareness of the range of material available (c)ensuring all staff and students read during USSR by earlier warning bell and insistence on no movement during USSR (d) discuss/advertise benefits and uses of USSR, especially senior students (e) all English classes to ensure that students have reading material e.g. novels (f) monitor USSR behaviour of weaker students (g) emphasize sustained reading (h) classroom teachers and YLCs becoming more proactive in discussing USSR	English KLA YLCs, English KLA All staff, Daily Org YLCs English KLA AEC, English Co-Ord All staff	Semester 2, 1997 & Ongoing	Improvement in student performance in Textual Understanding strand, English KLA, CFS Reduction in students late to USSR Reduction in students coming to USSR unprepared
	3.2.6			

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OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
3.2 **Address boys' literacy problems (continued)**	3.2.7 Improve the readability of the newsletter for all students by: (a) including student writing (b) including interesting, relevant topics e.g. student profiles, interviews, birth dates, excursion reports, student achievements (c)including pictures/photographs (d) including comics or puzzles (e) including competitions e.g. 'Guess the student' (f) considering initiation of a student newspaper/newsletter; possibly as a unit (g) keeping accessible files for (a) - (e) above	Staff (esp English KLA Students Staff, Students, SWC Staff, Students Staff, Student Volunteers or Students in rotation SRC, Staff AP	Ongoing	Student writing included in the newsletter Positive feedback about newsletter Student participation in competitions
	3.2.8 Provide professional development in Literacy and Gender (a) implement *Boys and Literacy* professional development program (6 x 90 mins) (b) encourage participation from across the staff in professional development in gender and literacy; including *Making a Difference*	AEC AEC, PDC	T3, 1997 Ongoing	Broad participation in the PD program Participation in PD programs
	3.2.9 Introduce a 'buddy system' for students with literacy problems, involving teachers working with individual students on a voluntary basis outside normal class time. Implementation would involve: (a) getting staff support (b) identifying students (c)matching students/staff (d) organise time for operation of buddy system	 SWC AEC/SWC/Class teachers SWC SWC/Daily Org	 May, 1997 June, 1997 Sem 2, 1997	Improve achievement levels of specific students Increase effort award levels in English

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OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
3.3 **Reduce incidence of problem behaviour**	3.3.1 Use of year level specific discipline/classroom management plans when required	AP/SWC	T 1&3, 1997	Reduced incidence of problem behaviours referred to FT or SWC
	3.3.2 Modify student programs and teaching methods to meet student needs	SWC/YLCs/Class Teachers AEC	Ongoing	Reduced incidence of problem behaviours by students with learning difficulties or inappropriate courses
	3.3.3 Use of vocationally-oriented courses to motivate students (e.g. School-Work program, Industry & Enterprise, Dual Recog)	Curriculum Co-ord/YLCs/Work Ed/ Commerce Co-ord	Start 1997 Ongoing	Low incidence of problem behaviours by students in vocational courses
	3.3.4 Clear, consistently-implemented student code of conduct	AP/SWC/YLCs/ All Staff	T1, 1997 Ongoing	Reduced incidence of problem behaviours
	3.3.5 Increase staff supervision at lunch and recess	AP/Daily Org/LAC	T2, 1997	Reduced incidence of problem behaviours at lunch and recess
	3.3.6 Use of special assistance for students with learning difficulties	AEC/YLC/Class teachers	Ongoing	Reduced incidence of problem behaviours by students with learning difficulties
	3.3.7 Early identification of students with behaviour problems and adjustment of situation (e.g. locker position, unit selection)	YLC/SWC/Gr 6 Teacher	Ongoing	Reduced incidence of problem behaviours
	3.3.8 Positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviours	All staff/PD Co-ord/AP/SWC	T1, 1997	Increased incidence of appropriate behaviours
	3.3.9 Use of external counselling services	SWC	Ongoing	Improved support for students with behaviour problems and reduced incidence of problems
	3.3.10 Provision of information and PD for parents	SWC	As available/Ongoing	Reduced incidence of problem behaviours
1.6	3.3.11 Use of behaviour contracts, detention and suspension	AP/SWC	Ongoing	1.7 Reduced incidence of problem behaviours

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OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
3.3 Reduce incidence of problem behaviours (cont)	3.3.12 Use of Peer Support Program	SWC & trained staff	1997	Peer Support Program established. Reduced incidence of bullying and harassment of Year 7 students
	3.3.13 Year 9 Personal Development Programs ('Buildings Blokes' & Year 9 Girls' Program) & 'Delta D' Health Program for Year 10			Reduced incidence of problem behaviours at Years 9 & 10
	3.3.14 Provide recreational activities for students at lunch/recess	YLC/other staff/Rewards & Recognition Program		Reduced incidence of problem behaviours at lunch/recess
	3.3.15 Professional development for staff and programs for students in communication, conflict resolution, anger management etc.	PD/SWC/AEC	1997	Improved staff-student interaction

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OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
3.3 Increase proportion of boys obtaining Effort Awards	3.5.1 Establish objective criteria for Effort Awards for inclusion on reports	Curriculum Committee	T1, 1997	Objective criteria established and included on new report forms
	3.5.2 Publicise Effort Award criteria through newsletter	AP	Early T2, 1997	Effort Award criteria publicised in newsletter
	3.5.3 Publicise and explain Effort Award criteria to students through form assemblies and classes	YLCs/Class teachers	Early T2, 1997	Students aware of criteria and understand how to achieve them
	3.5.4 Build reward into classroom management plans OR Encourage students in setting and regularly reviewing goals, including attainment of Effort Awards	Class teachers	Ongoing	Increased proportion of boys attaining Effort Awards

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OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
3.7 Expand the Year 9 Boys' and Girls' Personal Development Programs	3.7.1 Review Girls' Programs in consultation with Community Health Service co-ordinator and plan program annually	AEC/Program staff/ NDCHS worker	August 1996 and then annually	Existing program reviewed and planning for 1996 completed
	3.7.2 Investigate inclusion of self-defence in Girls' Program or as stand-alone program	AEC	T4, 1996	Feasibility of provision of self-defence established
	3.7.3 Expand 'Building Blokes' program to 3 days, including more activities OR Organise a follow-up day of activities for Year 9 boys	A&E Committee 'Building Blokes' staff	1997 early T4, 1996	Increased positive response of boys to program
	3.7.4 Involve outside agencies in planning and implementation of 'Building Blokes' program (e.g. regional social worker)	AEC	early T3 annually	External input to program established. Positive evaluation by students
	3.7.5 Document 'Building Blokes' program and produce manuals for teacher use	AEC	T3, 1996	Wider awareness of program. More staff involvement

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Examples of School Initiatives in Boys' Education

MIDDLE SCHOOL INITIATIVES
Making Boys Bloom
Dunheved, The Entrance and Erina High Schools

PROGRAMS FOR BOYS
Building Blokes
The Model Aeroplane Club
The Blokes Program
A boys' program with cultural, spiritual and community roots

PROMOTING THE ARTS
Power, Oppression, Ritual and Celebration

CLASSROOM STRATEGIES
Tips from the Chalk Face
Internet Chess on Nexus

MENTORING
Let's have a story, Dad
The Skill of Listening to Boys

DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS
Developing Social Skills
Affirming Boys' Roles in Red House

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MAKING BOYS BLOOM

Martin Wallace, Blackfriars Priory School, Prospect SA

The changes needed to "make school good for boys" (as Steve Biddulph puts it) have much in common with the methods of "middle schooling" being discussed up and down the country. Essentially, the move has to be from alienation to engagement, from fragmentation to integration, from individualism to teamwork - both for teachers and for students.

Both middle schooling and boys' needs face formidable obstacles in many schools. They both demand structural change, and in schools traditionally dominated by the needs of the upper secondary curriculum, this change has to be fought for.

Some writers have suggested that this is more or less a "do or die" affair. Larry Scott from the Tasmanian Department of Education, for example, wrote in EQ Australia this year, that incremental reform within the existing timetable structures of a school is "an impossible task".
"Radical reform is the only answer", he added.

I am not so sure. If "radical reform" proves impossible, do we just give up? My own experience at Blackfriars (an all boys, 3 - 12 school in Adelaide) suggests that quite modest reforms can have very beneficial results.

Before these small reforms, Blackfriars was a fairly typical boys' school. Students moved every 40 minutes from room to room, going from one specialist teacher to another. Teachers liked having "their" room. Each teacher had a personal style, to which boys were expected to adapt - at 40-minute intervals! Each boy had a locker in one of the school corridors, and was expected to ensure he had the correct books for each period.

Many boys were well organised and coped well. Others carried all their books around all day, because the task of being organised was beyond them. Lugging around heavy bags was actually easier! The stress took its toll .... I would not say alienation was high, but it was evident.

Outside one of the classrooms frequented by year eights was a flower box. Long abandoned, it contained only some dry, lifeless earth. Certainly, its brick surround served as a seat from time to time, but it was meant for something more beautiful. If only someone would plant a flower ... but then, would it last?

We made Year 8 (first in secondary in S.A.) our focus for reform. Our structural reforms were modest. Essentially they involved:

* Changing the entire secondary timetable from eight 40 minute classes to six 50 minute classes
* Asking staff to volunteer to be involved with year 8 as their specialty.
* Assigning three or four "subjects" to one teacher in each class, effectively allowing them to "block" time as they chose. We called these staff "key teachers."
* Basing each year 8 class in one room, and proving lockers in that room. Now it was the boys who had their own rooms!

I think that the biggest change was in the attitude of teaching staff. By seeking volunteers as key teachers, we began with a core eager to make the reform work. A former primary teacher was appointed Year 8 co-ordinator, and the principal was an enthusiastic backer of the experiment.

One of the great signs that there had been a change was unexpected. I saw a boy with a watering can

tending that abandoned flower bed. Yes, the class nearest to it had decided to "adopt" it, bought some seedlings and potting mix, and now, as I write, the Cinereria is in glorious bloom! The boys water it faithfully every day. Yes, the brick surround still serves as a seat - with the inevitable occasional damage to the plant, but boys and flowers have learned to co-exist.

I have only such anecdotal evidence to offer. Certainly, far fewer boys have been sent off to the "withdrawal room" for recalcitrant students. When one of the key teachers was away for some time ill, he was quite touched by the warmth and concern of the boys for his well being. The numbers opting to continue with a language study and with music in Year 9 have risen dramatically. In short, we seem to have a happier, gentler group of boys, more engaged with their learning and more interested in their environment.

Moreover, even though Year 9 students are still more-or-less working on the former system, they have coped better and still seem to be reaping similar rewards. While the challenge remains to carry the reforms into year 9, the foundation formed in Year 8 has not been eroded. Moreover, the changes in teaching methods which the structural changes allow and promote are surely filtering through.

Thus, while I appreciate the impatience of reformers like Larry Scott, I would say: a little really can be a lot!

Reprinted from Boys in Schools Bulletin No3.

TEACHING TEAMS

Gerry Gee, Principal, Dunheved High School NSW

Currently we have teaching teams in years 7 & 8. There is an integrated curriculum of units of work based on Key Learning Area outcomes. There are no subjects per se and the number of teachers that students see each week has been reduced to five. There are six periods (53 min) per day - reduced from eight periods (40 min). The students don't change rooms.

The teams meet once a week and collaboration between male and female teachers on developing units of work has tended to break down the gender split. The team focus has also improved behaviour management as issues are dealt with immediately.

Outcomes so far: One positive effect for those boys is the reduction in suspensions from 25% of the year (90% were boys) to 1.5% (2 boys only) A positive improvement in welfare in that the mindset which sees fighting as the way of settling disputes is breaking down. They don't happen! Fractional truancy (kids wagging for a fraction of the day e.g: certain lessons) is nil. The 'Cool to be a fool' ethos is breaking down rapidly in year 7. Academically, literacy levels are increasing. The only thing that is different is the team structure and improved teacher collaboration.

Harassment between genders has declined, although within genders hasn't changed. We haven't done extensive evaluations but the short term results are sufficiently encouraging that next year we are moving to having Years 7/8 in separate blocks and a Year 7/8 faculty with it's own Head Teacher.

Reprinted from Boys in Schools Bulletin No1.

MIDDLE SCHOOL INITIATIVES

A SMALL GROUP MODEL

Doug Blake, Deputy, Erina High School NSW

Erina has put in place a small group model in year 7. The number of teachers in front of kids hasn't reduced, there's still 10 –12 teachers per week. The students are divided into learning groups of four, two girls & two boys of like ability and a good mix of learning intelligences– not their friendship groups. There are no all boys groups. We use co-operative learning structures (including learning contracts, classroom signals, a learning to learn stream) and teach social skills as the need comes up. Teachers meet once a fortnight.

On the first day of school, all the Year 7 students were welcomed in the hall. We set the ground rules and spent quite some time playing co-operative games. This was reinforced daily during the first week.

The overall impression is that it's going well. Year 7 has settled in better. They are calmer and relate better across groups. Each lesson is not a fresh chance for naughtiness. There's still some 'cool to be a fool' behaviour but the tables moderate themselves well. There is a real positive effect on boys' motivation and outcomes. One Maths teacher has "never enjoyed teaching more". He reports "no-one fails" in his classes, instead, 20 out of 27 students are scoring an 'excellent'.

Students were surveyed in Term 3. A large majority reported enjoying co-operative learning. Students recognise that they get more work done in learning groups than in friendship groups.

Reprinted from Boys in Schools Bulletin No1.

CORE TEACHERS

Ted Roberts, Acting Principal, The Entrance High School NSW

Year 7 classes are organised around core teachers taking several subjects which means the number of year 7 teachers has been reduced. The level of suspensions and behaviour problems has reduced. One indicator is the end of term excursion where students with three or more green tickets (on the level system) are not allowed to go. Even though the number of boys excluded rose from 2 in term 1 to 9 in term 2, this is a substantial reduction from previous tears in the number of year 7 students in trouble at school.

Reprinted from Boys in Schools Bulletin No1.

THE BUILDING BLOKES PROGRAM

Information provided by Greg Currie, Access and Equity Co-ordinator

Boort Secondary College is a small rural secondary school with a strong and long-established commitment to gender equity. Through the 1980s the major focus was the education of girls.
When the school's Equal Opportunity committee sat down in 1991 to plan a personal development program for boys (later to become 'Building Blokes'), boys were not the main focus of our thinking. The school had initiated many gender equity programs for girls and the girls were telling the school, "That's all very well, but you've got to do something about the boys!". Thus an important aim of the program at its genesis was to increase boys' awareness of the construction of gender and so support established gender equity programs for girls.

Building Blokes, staffed by two male teachers, was organised in 1991 as a two day, off-campus program held during the school's work experience week. A 'sister' program for Year 9 girls was also conducted, emphasising non-traditional skills (basic car maintenance, using small engines, football, self-defence) and examining the issue of sexual violence.

In the first three years of its life, Building Blokes was preceded by a meeting of the program leaders with parents of the boys to explain the aims and benefits of the program in some detail. A small minority of parents were quite hostile to the program fearing that it sought to emasculate boys or undermine their image of their masculinity. The meetings were generally successful in opening up the issues involved to discussion and reassuring some parents in regard to the aims of the program. In its six years Building Blokes has had just one case of a parent withdrawing their son from the program. As the school community generally is now more familiar with accepting of the program the parent meeting has been discontinued and replaced by an explanatory letter.

Expansion of the boys' program was prompted by the growing list of topics to be covered. Building Blokes in 1996 included sessions on communication skills, looking at violence (conducted by the Department of Education regional social worker), conflict resolution, gender awareness, health and sexuality and alcohol. Evaluation by students immediately following the program was very favourable, although the sessions on violence continues to be confronting or discomforting to some boys.

Boys' evaluations also suggested that, having discovered that the girls got to play football, work on cars, mess about with small engines and use a ride-on mower, they felt short-changed for 'fun' activities. Because of the increased need for staffing of the concurrent work experience program, we were unable to extend 'Building Blokes' to three days in 1996. Instead, it was decided to offer the boys a stand-alone day of activities of their choice, provided that choice was "something different" or "something they would not normally get a chance to do." The boys were comfortable with this condition and the consensus was that they wanted to see an art exhibition and see a live show. This was accomplished through a bus trip to Melbourne, taking in the Paley Collection from the Museum of Modern Art, New York at the National Gallery, lunch in the city and a matinee performance of 'Sunset Boulevard'. The reaction of the boys to the full-on theatre experience at the refurbished Regent was something to behold. All agreed it was a stunning success, broadening cultural experience and creating a bond between staff and students.

Documentation of the Building Blokes program was accomplished with the aid of a small grant under the Victorian *Working with Boys* project. We have produced a teacher's manual and an accompanying student resource book. It has made it easier to induct new staff to the program and to assist other schools inquiring about Building Blokes, a regular happening since the inclusion of the program in a directory of processes and programs used in Australian schools.

Reprinted from Boys in Schools Bulletin No2.

THE MODEL AEROPLANES CLUB

by Richard Waites, Anna Bay Public School NSW

As a way of providing for the gifted and talented pupils Anna Bay Primary School programs a one-hour Club session one day per week for one term. The boys and girls can select from a range of activities offered by staff (even the groundsman) and volunteer parents. Once selected, the boy or girl stays in that club for the ten-week term and may change club groups the following year.

The activities offered include: gymnastics, pantomime, puppetry, drawing and painting groups, paper craft, a school newspaper production on computer, outdoor sports, indoor board games and making flying model aeroplanes.

The Model Aeroplanes Club seems to attract those boys who love the idea of doing something with their hands. Many of those boys who find their behaviour constantly being questioned are found within this club as well. Boys need to be Year 5 or Year 6 to be a member of this club but several able and dexterous Year 4 boys are also included. The school provides the materials – the plans, patterns, balsa wood, glue; the boys provide texta colours to decorate each model and when the club term ends the boys take home the models they've made.

This club gives the boys the opportunity to hear of the exploits from World War II of the various flying scale models they are making, the construction, insignia's etc. and the theory of flight for each plane. They use dangerous razor blades and pungent smelling glue. They prepare each Focke Wulf, Mustang or Kittyhawk in its correct battle colour. It's delicate, careful, time consuming effort. Finally the model is flow, successes appreciated, adjustments made, breakages occasioned and repairs undertaken.

Whether it is because it holds the boys interest, gives them a chance to acquire a skill, or maybe gives them a sense of adventure, for that one hour per week there is no behaviour problem from anyone, only requests to go flying.

Reprinted from Boys in Schools Bulletin No2.

BLOKE'S PROGRAM: 100 HOUR ELECTIVE, YEARS 9 & 10

Rollo Browne interviews Kamie Kershed, formerly Crestwood High School NSW

What is the context of your work with boys?

Crestwood is a co-ed state high school with over 1000 students, a majority are anglo-Australians. The community would be in the middle socio-economic range. The Head Teacher Welfare and I were running a program on peer mediation and realised that something extra was needed for some boys. The executive supported this and the 'Boys Like Other Kinds of Education' (BLOKES) program developed. As an elective (6 periods per 10 day cycle) it had to compete against traditional subjects and I entered a course outline in the electives book. There was also a parallel course for girls (200 hours I think, over the two years).

In 1996 there were about 15 students. Others were interested but some parents refused to consider it. Half of the class were behaviour problems, all were struggling to find their way in school. Many were reluctant readers and writers. In 1997 the demand increased and the class rose to 25 or so. I ended up with the real hoons.

What happened?

The emphasis was working with them as blokes and the issues that faced them. In the first semester the focus was on stereotypes in behaviour. In the second it was changing stereotypes and changing yourself. There was lots of self-esteem work. Early on I established certain parameters around openness and honesty and the need to be respectful. We covered such things as anger, relationships, put-downs & teasing and used a lot of class discussion. I used lots of quick active stuff that was interesting and fun so that we did the social development work before the kids realised it.

In the second year, I also got more specific. I would ask them what was their favourite time of day, their favourite period on a Monday, on Tuesday etc. I started finding a pattern in their answers related to the classes they had. They started talking about their style of learning. They weren't quite able to articulate it in terms other than "angry and frustrated" but as we investigated it became obvious that it was related to teaching methods and relationships with teachers. I became doubly aware how most lessons aren't conducive to boys learning styles. I didn't get as far as relating that back to staff - as you know there are a lot of brick walls there.

What worked?
Establishing a climate of trust. The reluctant readers and writers, even the hoons, were giving it a go. It was amazing. I put it down to trust. I came out with a lot of anecdotes, was someone who would really listen and tolerate a lot of things (eg honesty was more important than language). Kids blurted out a lot of personal detail. We were working on 'things you don't like about being a teenager' which of course focused a lot on school. One quieter kid got up, pointed at the hoons up the back and said: "What I really hated was you blokes, calling me xxxx xxxxxx, for the last three years". There was a stunned silence. Then one got up and said, "I'm sorry. We didn't know."

We had discussion groups with older students, for example a Yr 11 English class (2 Unit Related) some of whom were interested enough to come down for topics like 'friendship' and 'respect & treating people properly'. We used community groups and invited guests and the boys undertook a ropes course (outdoor education) Some students from the girls elective program came. Later some boys went to a dinner (dressed up) that was part of the girls program. We also did a lot of media study, in particular we looked at 'The Sum of Us' [an Australian movie about a father & his gay son]. This was excellent.

Boys from the Blokes class became reading mentors. They were matched up with Year 7 kids with problems in reading. The Support Teacher trained the Blokes class boys in a tutoring program and then they met with their Year 7 boy for one period in a 10 day cycle. The Year 7's came out of class and initially they met in the library. After a while they could meet anywhere. The Year 7's were really keen and the 9/10's didn't mind. They established their own discipline and they got on with it. These relationships extended beyond reading into the playground: the 7's would come up and talk, the 9/10's would stir them a bit, you know, give them recognition and tell them to stay out of trouble. I wanted to extend this into the local primary school but didn't get that far. Also I would have liked to measure their reading ages to see if it made a difference there.

What were the outcomes?
It gave them an outlet. It helped them to realise how they could adapt to the system, take advantage of it and change instead of just fighting it. Their confidence in their abilities across a whole range of things rose. They stopped feeling so guilty or trying to hide their vulnerability. They proved they could be vulnerable in front of each other, Yet they wouldn't do it outside the class. They knew it was too much of a rat race. They did change their behaviour. When a friend of some class members died, they got involved in painting a mural and got up and spoke at the funeral. Some teachers commented on kids'

changed behaviour but I can't say that the course had an effect outside the class. The parents were fairly happy but it was too short a time to check changes in grades.

What lessons have you learned?
Boys need some form of specialised help. The school system would do well to carry over a strong pastoral care from Year 7 to Year 10, one period a week. You need to develop trust before you can start achieving and you need support from community organisations. Also, you need men to run the program. I left half way through the second year and a strong, outgoing welfare-oriented female teacher took over, but the kids wouldn't take to her. The Year 7 & 8 pastoral care program had done a lot of work on conflict resolution that had touched a lot of kids. Some of these boys entered in Year 9, the second year of the Blokes Program where I inundated them with personal development stuff. The issues became much more personal "What can I do about a father who treats me like shit?" Having this level of trust was very productive. Lastly, you need good support from your school executive.

Reprinted from Boys in Schools Bulletin No2.

A BOYS' PROGRAM WITH CULTURAL, SPIRITUAL AND COMMUNITY ROOTS

Greg Griffiths is currently Itinerant Support Teacher Behaviour, Dubbo District. He describes the development of a boys' program in an isolated, western NSW, central school with a high proportion of Aboriginal students.

The intervention arose from concerns about social problems in the community. There had been a number of male suicides and there was a high rate of domestic violence. As part of the response to these issues a multi-discipline team was set up involving DOCS (Department of Community Services), Community Health, the Police and community members. I was seconded from my position in Dubbo to lead the team.

The school realised that any welfare program was not going to be successful without a great deal of community support. A public meeting was held in the Town Hall, chaired by the Principal of the school. Community leaders and community elders were asked to come. Most community agencies were represented at the meeting.

The concern of the community wasn't particularly boys at that stage. There were concerns about self esteem, social skills, cultural identity and problem resolution by violence or threatened violence. In the discussion during the meeting, however, the community particularly targeted the Years 5 to 8 boys (9 to 12 year olds), as being the group most lacking the ability to resolve conflict.

There were two main developments, a Welfare Program and special programs for boys and girls. The Welfare Program commenced by identifying the core values for students at the school. These were: to respect themselves and their environment; to respect other peoples' property; to attend school; and, to get the best education they can.

School rules were developed supporting each of the core values and complementary class rules were established across the school. Positive consequences in the classroom might be encouragement, a material reward such as a sticker, or having an Aboriginal Education Assistant (AEA) deliver a positive note home. Students could earn points for attending school, participating in the lesson and not having an incident report written about them for that day. Additional points could be earned by extra curricula activities or trying hard. Points could be traded for meals (at the fortnightly BBQ) or for other material rewards.

PROGRAMS FOR BOYS

Community support, especially from the elders, was critical. As the program was being developed, the AEA's and I visited community members to confirm their direction and support. Both a boys' program is a girls' program were prepared. The girls' program was based on one developed through the Dubbo District ISTB team to complement *Boys in Relationships*. (The outline is below.) Using this as a base, units focussing on cultural issues were developed to parallel the boys program.

We started developing a program for boys using *Boys and Relationships* as a basis. I sat down with some community representatives and the AEA's and we worked through a number of different ideas to decide the most appropriate. When we began developing units we realised that there were many assumptions included in Boys and Relationships that were not appropriate for these boys and that there were important elements of their cultural identity which needed to be included. When we asked what were the good things about being a boy we found that the boys had some difficulty with their Aboriginality and their gender in this locality. Many did not have a strong understanding of their culture.

To introduce self identify and cultural identity into the program a number of units were written, with the AEA's in particular. These units were taken to the elders to ensure their support. Some of the elders immediately requested to be involved.

The kids were divided into groups taking family groupings into account, so that there was a spread of students from Year 5 to Year 8 in each group. Any difficulties were worked through with the AEA's and the elders to develop appropriate groups. Sessions with the group leaders made them aware of deflection techniques and their legal responsibilities concerning matters that may be discussed. DOCS officers assisted in the debriefing sessions after each lesson.

The leaders of the groups were elders, AEA's and Community Leaders; female leaders for girls' groups and male leaders for boys' groups. Two or three adults worked with each group of eight students.

Lessons were not held in class. On one afternoon after lunch the elders came in to take their group. They often were held outside the school grounds, by the river, or in the school grounds under the trees. The first lessons focused on the students' ties with their town and area. Students visited the cemetery to identify relatives' graves. Community members discussed with them who their aunt's and uncle's were; how long their families had been in the area and their ties with the locality.

We also did self report cards. Totems were drawn in the centre of the page and students were asked to identify their own. Discussion based on the totem groupings followed with students working out their importance. They also wrote down three friends they could trust; who their mum was; who their dad was; a favourite aunty and someone who spoke their language better than they did.

Similar exercises such as "find someone with the same uncle as you", or "find someone with the same totem" continued their exploration of themselves and their community. During these lessons the elders and community members were talking to them about their culture. For these boys, identifying with their locality and their culture was seen as a pre-cursor and a foundation to behaviour management and dealing with anger.

The feedback from staff and students has been very positive. Students attend the sessions regularly and the community members have requested additional time to follow up issues raised in the sessions. Teaching staff are finding that students have a more positive attitude towards school.

Complementing the boys' and girls' programs is a local language program. Knowledge of the local language has diminished over the years but a community member joins groups for two hours a week

demonstrating and teaching the local language to Kindergarten up to Year 7. All primary classes in the school are now called by Aboriginal names.

For these Aboriginal boys, "boys and relationships" has meant, not just getting on with their peers, but getting an identity. The school-based program has cultural, spiritual and community roots that extend far beyond the classroom.

Reprinted from Boys in Schools Bulletin No2.

Power, Oppression, Ritual and Celebration: Forum Theatre in a Boys School

Interview with Bryan Derrick, Christian Brothers College, St Kilda VIC

What is the context of your work with boys?

CBC is an inner-city, boys school with over 600 students and over 40 ethnicgroups. About a third have an Asian background. The program takes up to 20boys withdrawn from normal class for one whole day a week for the entireyear. It is voluntary and requires parents' permission. The boys are drawnfrom Years 9, 10 & 11. Some are good academic achievers, some are seriousbehaviour problems, most are struggling with school. It's very importantthat the group not be seen as for drop-outs. The current group is ethnicallymixed (50% anglo-australian) but is without members from Asian backgrounds.The program was initiated 5 years ago by the Principal who saw that therewas a group of boys whose needs were not being catered for and thought thismight be an answer. There are no additional fees for this program. Boys askto become involved and we have yet to send any boy back to class on thebasis of their behaviour.What happens?The program really has two strands. The first is creating or performing atsignificant events during the year (it used to be called the rituals group)such as the Induction of Prefects, Aboriginal Reconciliation Day, HiroshimaDay, Remembrance Day, Passion Play, the Farewell for Year 12 Students. Theseare calendar events requiring a range of planning, organisational, stagingand performance skills. They are not traditional, for example, the passionplay is a framed as a journey through oppression to freedom.

The second strand is group-devised pieces of theatre based on Augusto Boal's'Theatre of the Oppressed'. Topics such as peer-on-peer bullying, homophobicharrassment, boy-girl relationships, and trouble with the transit policeexpress aspects of the oppressive nature of school, classrooms, playground,streets and so on. The group has performed around the state and this yearwill focus more on performing to their peers.

The pieces last 15 - 20 minutes and may have up to 20 scenes. It is playedthrough once, then discussed with the audience in terms of where they wouldlike to change it. Audience members then stop a scene and take the place ofthe person who is oppressed and try something different. The focus is on theexploration of realistic alternatives, not cutesy-pie solutions. Last yearthe boys performed to 150 Year 10 girls on peer relations and homophobia.

What are the outcomes?

Each students develops a keen sense of being needed and that they would bemissed. There is a strong emphasis on co-operation & teamwork. The activityis the hub and they are the spokes of the wheel. There is an enormous amount of tangential work on relationships with each other. The level of harassment, putdowns, sexism, homophobia dropsexponentially. While it obviously affects the social development of theparticipating boys, it is impossible to say whether this has an impact onthe school culture as there are other initiatives related to bullying andharassment etc. Some times playing up in class is attributed to ForumTheatre, other times there is marked improvement in behaviour. In one case astudent with ADD who was a nightmare in both class and Forum made a dramaticchange when we arranged for him to meet an agent, a cherished dream of his.I put this down to winning back a sense of hope.¿ They walk a foot taller (self esteem). We use a very simple ritual everyday of eye to eye contact, handshake and wishing the other well for the day.Some of the students cannot (initially) look you in the eye.¿ They learn to negotiate with teachers. In the early years there was severeresistance to the inconvenience of boys absences and some threats byteachers ("I'll fail you"). The boys learn to return to class and work itout - "I need to discuss what's happening in English because I'll be awayand need to make up the time." They are not excused their normal class load.They are now beginning to negotiate out of Forum Theatre to attendparticularly important lessons starting new units of work in the classroom.¿ Increase in

organisational skills in managing their time and work. For some, grades go down initially. Others have found it too difficult andreturn to class.¿ Increase in tactility, caring touching, massaging headaches rather thanpunching and rumbling.¿ Improved acting and dramatic skills - a number have gone on to furtherstudy.¿ About 80% of the boys have improved academic outcomes despite the initialdrop. Parents watch this closely. Letters from parents to the principal arevery supportive of the program.

The status of the group in the school varies. Some students dismiss it as 'abunch of poofters'. Others give it high recognition. The staff had strongopinions about some of these boys and were boggled by the kid's confidenceduring the staff performance dealing with oppression in schools last year.The boys had devised a confronting scene in a Maths class. Some staff wantedto focus on the teacher's behaviour but were redirected to find alternativebehaviours from the student's position.

The positive role of ritual in the school has exploded in the last fouryears. The closing ceremony for Year 12 in 1996, involved students crossinga 30 ft bridge with large looming cloth figures representing the unknownchallenges of the future. The bridge had combustible materials set in eachrail post which were then lit by the school captain and vice captain. Whenthe bridge burnt down, the message "Fear Not The Future Goodbye - CBC1996" was spelt out in large letters behind the fire. Boys look forward tothese events and wonder what will happen this year.

One staff member designed a spine-tingling ANZAC Day ritual. There was aroll call of boys who had died in World Wars 1 & 2, Korea & Vietnam. As eachname was read out, a boy stood called out 'Present Sir' and came to stand atthe front where a candle was lit.

There is an increase in the use of creative methods across the school, forexample the prefect group had a session on Images of Manhood speaking tophotographs [eg Photolanguage]

What lessons have you learned?
The role of a retired teacher who attends this group is very significant. Heis like an elder in the school and is involved in the shaping of the PassionPlay. The boys go up to him every day and shake his hand. It took a good two years to establish the program. It needed much closerwork with staff to sell the program and communication of what's going on,reassurance and recognition of the links to their work. Likewise with theparents, that learning in this way is valid. We don't guarantee a 100%success rate and we cannot assess its effect quantitatively. The mainbenefits are a sense of oneness in the group, bonding and an in depthengagement with role models. We only hear about the spin-offs later. Anumber of ex Forum Theatre boys now get paid for performances as members ofthe Theatre of the Oppressed, the adult group I direct.

I work at the school one day a week and have fought to keep the programseparate from the school curriculum. This is important so that its impact isnot diluted. The kids own it. Forum Theatre is not a way to get out of class. It's Forum and five days of school work.

Any advice to interested schools?
Do it. You do need someone who understands the system, what schools areabout with good negotiation skills and the 110% support of the leadershipteam. The young people are the least of the problem.

Reprinted from Boys in Schools Bulletin No3.

TIPS FROM THE CHALK FACE NO 1.

By Ann-Marie Furney

Teachers often find boys' classroom behaviour difficult, particularly the way they lose attention quickly and then spend the rest of the lesson being disruptive. Whilst girls can likewise exhibit disruptive behaviour, teachers perceive that girls can more readily be encouraged to return to the point of a lesson. So, for effective classroom teaching we have to make those opening minutes count. Engagement and motivation have to be established quickly and effectively if we want to ensure optimum learning conditions for all the students in our classes.

The following are suggestions for ensuring engagement. Some of the ideas will require a little preparation, but, once prepared, the resources you will be able to be reused. Some ideas might seem a little wild and wacky and many people respond with "I could never do that!" My experience is that you have to approach this whole concept with an open mind and focus on your key purpose. To have your students laughing with you is the most effective teaching aid and rapport building mechanism you will ever find as a teacher - so BE BRAVE and keep your "eyes on the prize" and be able to say with confidence that - "my students are engaged, on task and ready to learn." After all this is the buzz in teaching.

These ideas have been trailed in "real" classrooms on "real" kids, the ideas come from direct experience rather that from a theory base. However, it is possible to trace why some ideas work back to particular theories about how children learn.

Feel free to use the ideas offered as a springboard for developing your own ideas and strategies - what has worked in my room might not directly translate into success in yours. However, with a few modifications and knowledge of your own kids they can be made to fit any teaching situation. Good luck and have FUN!

GETTING THE ATTENTION OF ALL THE STUDENTS (THE BOYS TOO)!

TIP NUMBER 1

Try to make the start of the lesson quick and snappy - games, quizzes and puzzles are a good way to do this. Kids will often respond well to versions of games they are familiar with from television - many are readily adaptable to classroom use, for example:

"Now You See It" - to play - select 15-20 key words from a unit of study you have completed or are currently working on. Draw a simple grid 20 cm by 20cm onto an OHP sheet. Label the horizontal axis LINE and the vertical POSITION and number each square. Using your 20 key words make a list of simple crossword style clues which reveal the actual word you are looking for. Record the questions on a separate sheet of paper. Fill in the grid with the words you have selected. Blank squares should be filled with mixed letters, until there are no spare spaces on the grid. Your puzzle will look exactly like a simple wonderword - but it is important to remember that the grid can only be read from left to right and all hidden words have to appear on a single line.

<u>To play</u>

Form the class into two teams and select one student to be point scorer. Read out the clues and let the teams call out the answers. Points are awarded by adding the line and position number.

TIP NUMBER 2

Adapt the readily available game Pictionary to help you focus students at the start of a lesson. Running a weekly competition where you chart team results onto a display board in the classroom adds to the interest. Make the words/phrases used as the stimulus for the game, words and phrases students are working within a unit of study. Start the lesson with 5 minutes of competition time each day.

To Play: You only really need a list of words/phrases written onto small cards and some butcher's paper. What works really well is a portable whiteboard - these allow the whole class to see and this leads to lots of great interaction between the kids - and it stops paper wastage. If your students are inclined to make negative comments about each other in group-type forums, set up some simple ground rules before you start. I always reserve the right to deduct points from teams who make inappropriate comments about other team members or opposing team mates. You need to do this at the start or before you play your first game. One of boys' pet hates is that they perceive that teachers change the rules as they go along. So if you know that negative comments could be a problem, set the rules up before you start.

TIP NUMBER 3

Word BINGO is a popular game with junior students and a great lesson starter. To make a really valuable permanent resource, make some laminated BINGO cards - draw these up on computer. At 10 spaces per card you should be able to fit about 4 to each piece of A4 paper. A simple grid is all you need on some brightly coloured, light cardboard. If you use 5 or 6 different colours you can quickly and easily use the colours to form the students into teams. Have your class set of Bingo cards laminated they will last for years and are a fantastic adaptable and reusable resource.

To Play: Again use key words from a current or past unit of study - try to have a bank of about 30 words to select from with clues written out for each of the words. Write 10 different words on each student's Bingo card. Hand out the filled cards to the students - they match the clues to words on their card. The first to fill their card with 10 correct matches is the winner. This is a great reinforcement strategy for key words and a little different from garden variety spelling list and dictation.

If you play the game at the beginning of the lesson, have the students get ready for round 2/3/4 etc the next day by having them clean the cards with some hand wipe paper and select 10 words from the main list to refill the Bingo cards. If you use water soluble OH pens, it's easy to wipe the cards off and set them up for the next round.

You can also use these as a quick spelling test record. Remember, charting the results is also good fun. Most boys love a bit of competition - it gives them a reason for doing something - so use that natural urge to your advantage. With reluctant classes I've often resorted to a spot of bribery as well. Offer simple prizes like canteen vouchers for a can of drink, or a lolly bag to the week's champion Bingo player. It's amazing what external rewards can sometimes achieve.

If you are a maths teacher, you can substitute maths problems and answers for words. Simply put the answer to simple calculations on the Bingo cards and then read out the actual problem - this is a great way to get their brains working.

These ideas are offered as lesson starters but you will find they will work well as diversions during long double periods or as a "fun" activity after some difficult content. They are also excellent for revision and consolidation of material students have been learning. Just the ticket in the lesson prior to an exam, when all the kids want to do is study rather than co-operate with you.

THE KEY

The key is to have fun, don't drag the ideas out past their use by date and don't automatically expect that every kid will love every game. Difficult to handle kids can often be distracted by giving them a responsible job in the organisation of the game, like scorer or judge, or making them the person who charts the results. Be positive in your own presentation of the game, tell them what it will do for them and encourage some competition.

AND FOR ADVANCED PLAYERS

If you are game, dress up like a quiz master the first time you play one of the games. I once cut out Tony Barber's face and stuck it on a paddle pop stick and held it up to my face as I read out each clue in a game of Sale of the Historic Century - the kids thought it was a huge joke and got right into the spirit of the event. Simple props like badges, silly ties or the like can really make the difference to kid's attitudes. Laughter at the start of a lesson is a surefire way of ensuring a positive start to learning. When they laugh with you they will be happy to have a go at almost any activity.

Reprinted from Boys in Schools Bulletin No1.

IcoN : Internet Chess on Nexus

.... or how I accidentally improved my students' English .....

By Elizabeth Ports (eports@nexus.edu.au)

ICoN is a Chess server, run by DETE as its contribution to EdNA (Education Network Australia). The program was written by Prof. Daniel Sleator of Meillor University who runs ICC, the Internet Chess Club. ICoN is a version of it, administered by Alan Goldsmith who works at The Curriculum Resources Unit, Ingle Farm, South Australia, and he has acquired it for the exclusive use of Australian students and teachers. You don't just play chess on ICoN; you can "talk" to others at the same time as you play through "tells" and can leave and receive messages to people who are not currently logged on. You use a nickname rather than your real name, and you can write "finger notes" about yourself if you wish, and only the administrators know who you are. It attracts over 500 students and teachers a day, playing at school with networked access to the internet. All schools, public or state, anywhere in Australia are welcome to join ICoN. Alan Goldsmith is always keen to answer any questions about ICoN, and can be contacted by ringing him on ph 08 82627751, or emailing him agoldsmith@nexus.edu.au There is no charge to play on ICoN. If you want to join, visit the Website at www.nexus.edu.au/ozprojects/icon/

I am Elizabeth Ports, an English and Society and Environment teacher, and teacher in charge of chess, at the Middle School Campus of The Norwood-Morialta High School, a large suburban state school in South Australia. In 1997 my school let me run a lunchtime ICoN chess club three times a week for anyone who wanted to turn up. I was only interested in ICoN as a way of increasing the number of chess players at my school, and improving their skills. Soon there were at least twenty students, predominantly boys, there every ICoN session, with over forty registered. Several of them were my classroom students. I was pleased to see the usual spin-off for a co-curricular activity taking place, that I was having less difficulties in class with the ICoN boys, several of whom had learning difficulties and other problems. Some had Negotiated Curriculums, or were seen by the school to be At Risk.

I continued to focus on whether ICoN was increasing the number of girls playing chess, and helping students learn the ICoN commands. More girls were attracted to ICoN that to any other chess group, and their interactions with the boys were more relaxed and positive, often with the boys teaching them. The boys were interacting positively and cooperatively with each other, too. Someone would learn a new function or command and knowledge of this would ripple around the room. The students and I learnt together, as equals. They found it more fun to type text to each other in the room, rather than talk. The

students enjoyed calling me "io" instead of Miss Ports and they enjoyed teasing me in a way that went beyond what I would tolerate in the classroom, and yet they were usually better behaved, and working harder in their lessons. I was amused when they made spelling errors in their "shouts" which are printed on everyone's screen, (unless they are deliberately filtered out), that there would always be a correction by another student, sometimes in a humorous way. I was worried when one of my year 9 students was corrected in this way, as he had a genuine learning disability when it comes to spelling and a quick temper, but he took it in good spirit. Sometimes he sent me a "tell" about the spelling of a word before he "shouted" it, and I was very happy about it, as he did not show this care in the classroom.

I was surprised how some boys could tell me personal things in messages on ICoN, rather than tell me to my face outside of lessons. When I was on long-service leave, this trust continued, and though I avoided logging on to ICoN at lunchtimes, I received several messages. Most messages were of the "hello" variety, to keep in touch, but some were about serious concerns, which I was able to pass on to the school, and these were addressed by the administration.

I was surprised how committed boys were to the club, and how sad that they became when we started to have problems with our system earlier this year, which led to ICoN being cancelled until our school was recabled. Students are continually asking me when ICoN is returning, and they complain that they are bored lunchtimes, even though our friendly librarians have several chess sets for them to use lunchtimes, and we have ChessMaster 4000 CD-Rom networked.

It was only recently this year that I realised what the boys were missing: it wasn't the chess, it was the communicating. Though interviewing boys at my school, "talking" to boys accessing ICoN at night through their home computers, and exchanging messages with a variety of people, I learnt about the wider value of ICoN as an educational tool.
Here's what the boys told me.

Why did you get on ICoN?
Codebreaker:"I thought would be a change."
fig: "because my brother [cockroach] said it was really good."

On ICoN generally
kharn: "I don't really have anything much to say. ICoN rocks and that's all there is to it - Kharn the Betrayer."
Fox: "It is so *^*%#$%#@$f@ good I play it all the time."
Cloud: "ICoN helps me with my chess and helps me with public talking."

On the chess
oz: "Chess is a good strategy game, so it sort of gets the mind moving and helps you to concentrate in school."
Spackles: "ICoN is used at Urrbrae primarily as a chess developing tool, however we have several students who either are doing or who have done THRASS (Teaching Handwriting Reading and Spelling)." *[Urrbrae Agricultural High School, S.A., has an excellent ICoN club run by Spackles, the school's groundsman]*
cockroach: "I kept losing, so I stopped playing, but I kept coming back to talk...to people from other schools - in some cases other states."

On using computers
Spackles: "For some students ICoN is their first introduction to computers, despite them being yr 9 students. It has provided an easy way for them to demystify computing."

slug: "ICoN has helped me a lot in how to use a computer and I have taken these things to other programs." Spackles comments about slug that "he has doubled his typing speed and how often he types."

On social aspects
oz: "people are friendly....lots of people to talk to even if there are people you don't know."
Moojuice: " I liked doing it because you talked to people. Lunches are boring now. You can't really talk much in libraries."
Codebreaker: "Over ICoN you aren't really seeing people; there is no danger in talking to them, as you don't use your real names or addresses.....good to get to know other people in other schools."
fig: "...easier to talk to strangers. If I said something stupid, I don't look stupid: I can go away and not talk to them any more..... good to talk to other people."
Moojuice: "....free choice about who you talk to and what you talk about. I really liked talking to everyone and mainly having fun."

On leaving messages
Codebreaker: "The messages were good because I could send messages to people who weren't there, or who were sick, so when they came to ICoN, they could check their messages and know that I had said hello."

On English skills
Flash: "This has taught me how to write properly."
Boultstar: "..I have picked up a lot of computing skills and I'm a bit better at spelling plus I can make new friends while I'm using ICoN."
Codeman: "I am Luke Alexander, a tertiary student. ICoN has helped me with written communication skills by improving my typing speeds dramatically. It also increases my communication skills in general by allowing me to interact and communicate with people from different backgrounds etc that I would normally not come into contact with." *[Luke joined ICoN when he was a high school student, and now he is a young adult administrator, a source of advanced computing knowledge and an excellent role model for the boys]*

On typing
oz: "I couldn't type well; now I'm better."
fig: "probably improved my typing skills."
anonymous comment "I have to write on a laptop at school cuz my handwriting is so bad. Being on ICoN has helped me to learn to speed type and I have had my spelling improved by being corrected whenever I spelt anything wrong."

On motivation to improve communication skills
a parent who wishes to be anonymous: "My son is definitely motivated to write things using the internet medium, but unfortunately it mainly took the form of cheeky shouts and other jokes. Still, this is better than nothing as he really hates writing essays at school and will not get down to his homework if it involves long written exercises. It is a medium they like to use because it appeals to them technologically and at the same time, the context of chess, competitive and intellectual, is a good background to more social communication. PS After he logged on and talked to people a few times, I saw him practising with mavis, the typing software, so maybe he felt he wanted to be able to type and hence communicate more efficiently."

What can ICoN offer your boys? You may find it is a lot more than chess.

Reprinted from Boys in Schools Bulletin No3.

LET'S HAVE A STORY, DAD!

By Ineke Kolder-Wicks, South Wagga Public School NSW

Situated in the heart of a rural city, South Wagga Public School draws its 310 students from the centre of town and newer suburbs. The eleven classes are organised into Stages. There are 2 kindergartens and 3 classes each for Stages 1, 2 and 3. The support which the school receives from its community is a major factor in the success of many initiatives, including *Let's have a story, Dad!* In 1995, as a result of staff and P&C interest in the NSW Government report on boys' education, we formed a committee imaginatively called the Gender Equity Committee. The GEC, as it was known, comprised staff, parents and a community member who asked to join. Its aim was to identify sources of gender imbalance in social and educational activities and to suggest ideas to address these within the school.

A revealing piece of evidence available to the GEC was the Basic Skills Tests results. Although students generally performed well, the difference between boys' and girls' results mirrored state-wide trends: boys didn't do as well as girls, even though they had the same educational opportunities. One of the GEC's strategies was to improve access to positive literacy role models for boys from Kindergarten to Year 6. *Let's have a story, Dad!* developed from that.

Initially the program was designed to have Dads call into school and read a story from the library to a group of boys. With the primary consideration of "deficit reduction" in the field of male role models, our ideas were brought to ground by the practical implications of access to Dads. Many Dads who might volunteer would have daughters at school and would have equally valid reasons for being male role models for their daughters. Therefore the Committee acknowledged that the target audience would be boys, but that girls would also participate. At a staff meeting the plan for *Let's have a story, Dad!* was floated. Teachers' concerns and ideas were discussed. Not every teacher was enthusiastic, but all agreed to give the project a go. One specific issue which worried teachers was the unpredictability of a parent visit which might interrupt routines or an important lesson. The staff asked that specific times be made available, and that Dads should have to give prior notice, even if it was on the day. A mechanism was needed which would show who was coming, and when. The Committee wrote a notice for the School Bulletin with a tear-off reply to be sent in advance. The Convenor of the GEC became the project co-ordinator.

We set some limits on the administration of *Let's have a story, Dad!* and decided to restrict it to Term 3. That gave us time to plan and generate a level of expectation. Developing a buzz about the activity and being enthusiastic about its anticipated success added to the commitment and atmosphere. *Let's have a story, Dad!* was something new, and most teachers appreciated its potential. Having a short time frame helped the co-ordinator to keep the project on a high note and not get too exhausted.

In 1995, the program was closely timetabled to suit the teachers. Specific times when classes were available were listed and adhered to by the co-ordinator. After the first year, we realised that *Let's have a story, Dad!* was a valid form of literacy development and that the absence from the classroom of a small group did not spoil student outcomes. So in 1996, the timetable became a less structured arrangement of mutually agreed times between the Dad and the teacher. This had its problems. Less enthusiastic teachers and teachers who were busy and out of the classroom found it harder to get organised. Keeping all the teachers and Dads buoyed and on side is very important but difficult to achieve if a co-ordinator isn't there to remind the teacher of the Dad's arrival later in the day. Supervision and security in the library were discussed. The library, where groups could go, has both a terrace and a mezzanine with a tutorial room which became the outdoor and indoor reading areas. The librarian agreed to keep an eye on things for her three days on duty. The staff also decided that Dads who were

well-known to us could read on the other two days. Supervision in our school is not an arduous problem, but it is a consideration which must be resolved.

Next, teachers wanted a way to be sure we knew the Dad. The co-ordinator set the ball rolling for each first visit by a Dad with introductions to teachers and as a support for the teacher who might have concerns. Also, the staff agreed that on most occasions Dad would have 2-6 students, one of whom was his own child or relative. We also had the Term 2 parent interviews ahead of us, and teachers knew to take more notice of all the Dads visiting school at that time, not just the Dads of their students. We originally defined Dad as a male parent or grandparent. Then the Principal suggested that local sporting identities might be persuaded to read to the students, so the definition was widened a little. Although the Principal's idea didn't happen, it helped to have a tactic in reserve for specific purposes, such as reluctant students, rewards and media promotion.

Dads, too, needed special consideration. Most had commitments and couldn't spare a lot of time. Asking them to attend on only one occasion made that somewhat easier to "sell". It also allowed for the participation of Dads who could come in their lunch break or on rostered days off, had shift work, were out of town or who came to town for access visits; granddads could also join in. A few Dads did not know where to go at the school. The co-ordinator provided a welcoming face and escort to the right classroom. It makes a big difference if someone is expecting you. From the Dad's point-of-view, the coordinator was the welcoming committee, located in an easy-to-find classroom. From the administration's point-of-view, it was part of the security and checking which we needed. A good location pre-empted the problem of strangers wandering about unchallenged.

Boys were the focus of the project. Teachers sent mainly boys, sometimes in groups of only two or three. Usually the selection was ad hoc, based on class work completed and classroom behaviour. But teachers also had their own agendas for selecting participants: students with difficult paternal relationships, students who rarely had stories read at home, and other unexpressed reasons seemed to characterise a few groups. One class had such supportive Dads that the students had a roster and all attended sessions on more than one occasion. Some Dads didn't mind reading to extra groups from other classes which had received no offers. Because some Dads liked to talk about the story with the students, we realised that there wasn't much time if there were too many in the group. Occasionally, the session lasted up to an hour. We came to discover that four was the maximum size for management by most Dads.

Students were prepared for *Let's have a story, Dad!* at a whole school assembly. Behaviour codes often work for a teacher, but once out of view or earshot, students might be less predictable. With that in mind, the behaviour expectations were discussed in class and reinforced at school assemblies. Poor behaviour or attitude would not be tolerated, and Dads were asked to return the whole group to the classroom if there were any problems. Students were reminded of the behaviour expectations when the Dad collected them. Teachers asked Dads how the students behaved when they came back to class. The comments from this experience showed that Dads were reluctant to return to the classroom if one child misbehaved. It added weight to our belief that four was a maximum size for Dads to manage. Although the teachers were focused on student behaviour, the students were focused on time out of the teacher's orbit. Doing something different was viewed enthusiastically.

The management of *Let's have a story, Dad!* was made easier because the school librarian was on the GEC. Since we were to use the library and many story books were needed, the school librarian was asked whether it would be possible to set aside a collection of stories which appealed to students and could be read aloud in a maximum of 30 minutes. She prepared a mobile book box. The four compartments were separated into stages, Kindergarten, Stage 1,2 and 3. Each compartment contained about ten books which were changed by the librarian a few times during the term as she was on the spot to see the turn-over on at least three days a week. The sides of the box were emblazoned with attractive, fluorescent coloured

signs, *Let's have a story, Dad!* Everyone soon knew that the books were earmarked and that Dads would be coming to read stories in the school. Atmosphere and incentive to get Dad involved came from watching this preparation. Promotion by word-of-mouth amongst the students also brought an air of anticipation. The library was not the only source of books, as Dads sometimes brought stories that they wanted to share, stories that they loved as a child, or ones that had read recently which they thought might be appropriate.

How did the Dads get to know about *Let's have a story, Dad!* ? Students had seen the preparation in the library. We talked about *Let's have a story, Dad!* at school assembly. Students were also asked to invite Grandads for the occasion, even if they were only visiting Wagga. One Grandad who did find time for a group including his grand-daughter, was our local Member of Parliament. Towards the end of Term 2, the school Bulletin brought the first written explanation and request for Dads to help. A reply form for replies and confirmation by the co-ordinator was attached to the Bulletin. The form included spaces for the name of the student contact and class, and preferred dates and times. Regular update notices were placed in the Bulletin. One appeared about half way through the third term, extolling the success of the program and including another reply form. Dads and Mums who came to school for other reasons were approached by the co-ordinator to spread the word. To keep a high level of awareness of the project, the co-ordinator also spoke at morning assembly, clutching replies and asking "Is your Dad coming along, too?" or "Who has been to *Let's have a story, Dad!* ?

The result in 1995 was about 150 students had stories read by 22 Dads during the term. The following year, fewer students participated, probably 50. There is no actual record of the number of visits during 1996. The primary reason for the huge difference in the results over two years was the changed management of the project. Personal approaches and maintaining contact are important strategies which the Co-ordinator must use to galvanise interest from Dads.

One of the advantages of an initiative like *Let's have a story, Dad!* is that small efforts which we might take for granted are valued. Literacy outcomes have not improved ostensibly over two years. Time will tell if the students' attitude to literacy changes. There are indications that dividends are coming from the project. Vignettes of Let's have a story, Dad! come out in students' conversations in the classroom. Recently a Dad asked if the program was going ahead this year. Last year, an annual literacy prize was inaugurated and funded by one family for Presentation Night. The effort needed to put together a range of small projects which run for a short time over a number of years has much to commend it.

Reprinted from Boys in Schools Bulletin No1.

BOYS AND BOOKS

By Barb Christie, Maryborough State High School QLD

We decided to involve our junior high school boys in a reading program with the localprimary school for two reasons. It was a way of involving them in extra curricular non-sporting activities and also we wanted to do something about the lower literacy levels ofboys at both schools. Central State School (primary) was across the road and the teacherswelcomed the idea. They too were concerned about boys' literacy levels and realised thataddressing this problem in the early years would be a very positive approach. Thepresence of older boys would also provide role modelling for the younger ones.

The high school tutors' were not necessarily the good' boys, nor were they all goodreaders. We did not select them. They were asked to volunteer, although we did suggestto some that they would enjoy it. At the start we had 13 boys but after training a core of5 boys emerged.

MENTORING

A Reader' program originally designed for parents and teacher aides. We adapted the method to our teenagers and used the School SupportCentre staff to assist with the training. Both the 4 hour training and the 90 min initialpractice session at the primary school were done in school time.

The Year 2 boys were encouraged to read with the older boys and as a reward wereoffered time to draw and to get reading stickers. This was very popular. Each week wehad 5 or 6 older boys paired up with younger boys, 2 to 3 times a week for 20 minutesessions.

To start with our boys did not want any public recognition but after a while began sayingthat they were not being appreciated. So then they got their photos and a write up in thePrimary School newsletter and then in ours. This was probably an acknowledgement thatthey were feeling more confident in this task.

Stumbling Blocks

We had to stop taking our boys over in class time as it was interfering too much with theirstudies. Primary schools like to have reading at a certain time each day and our timetablesdidn't mesh very well. The biggest stumbling block came when we had to take our boys overto the primary school during lunchtime. This meant they had to give up their lunchtime twoor three days a week. This was hard as it was either their time for mucking around or forcatching up on studies. Another stumbling block was the absenteeism of the primary boys. This meant that the positive
rapport so important to the program could not be continually maintained on a 1:1 basis.

However a positive environment for reading was created. Our boys were never critical of whatthey were doing. They just felt it required too much of their own time. It would probably workif our boys could do it instead of a subject or an activity. Maybe it would work best in a P 10 school or using Year 7 boys with junior primary boys. [Year 7 is the last year of primary school in Queensland Ed]

Many of our boys still speak about it in a very positive manner and look at it as an experience that helped them grow as people. Often the primary school boys will call out to our boys if they see them, and want to chat about spacecraft or motorbikes etc. Parents of the older boys were also positive and, at a special morning tea, commented that their sons looked forward to it and often spoke about it at home.

It was great fun and very rewarding, I would suggest other schools do it!! It was very positive to both the older and the younger boys.

Reprinted from Boys in Schools Bulletin No 4.

Developing Social Skills

By Catherine Williams, Deputy Principal, Roseville Public School NSW

Roseville Public School currently has 585 students enrolled in twenty one classes, with 25% of the children from backgrounds other than English. One third of current Year 6 children will attend independent secondary schools, however many families have chosen to have their children educated at Roseville. Parent support and participation in school activities are exceptional and the students benefit from the positive involvement of their parents in all facets of school life.

The P & C is very active and a catalyst for continuous school development. A joint parent-school initiative to address the area of Self Esteem commenced in 1997. Some parents had become concerned about the kids that did not appear to be successful in conventional ways. 'The same few children seem to get all the recognition. What about all the others?' They wanted to give 'more kids pegs to hang their hats on and feel good about themselves' The P & C committed a budget of $10 000 to support this initiative.

Getting Going

A committee was formed consisting of interested parents, teachers, Principal , Deputy Principal and School Counsellor. The first few meetings focused on developing a common understanding of the concept of self esteem This required input from various experts, professional readings and a great deal of dialogue within the group. A series of evening Parent Forums were organised using guest speakers such as Dr Steve Zolezzi, Harry Berwick, Lorraine Corne and Dr John Irvine. One School Development Day was also dedicated to teacher inservicing on self esteem.

We also decided to check the extent to which poor self esteem was actually an issue in our school. Teachers were asked to review their students in four domains (Academic, Physical Abilities, Physical Appearance, Peer Relations) in light of set criteria. To evaluate the reliability of teacher identification, the School Counsellor assessed 10% of the student population using H. Marsh's Self Description Questionnaire. The findings confirmed the reliability of teacher assessments. Teachers identified 57 students as displaying behaviours associated with poor self esteem in one or more domain. Of the four domains, two were significant - Reading and Peer Relations.

Reading

For reading, the P & C provided funding to employ an additional part-time teacher to expand the School's Literacy Support Program. Two- thirds of the students in this program are boys. Students in Year 1 work in withdrawal groups of 4, while those in Years 2-5 work in withdrawal groups of no more than 6. The main method used with the latter groups is Reciprocal Teaching of Reading as the emphasis is placed on reading for meaning, the procedure is structured and every student is trained and takes turns to lead their group. A teacher was employed part time to work with the groups in Years 3-6.

Year 6 students receive in-class support. This decision was made after we tried withdrawal but found that behaviour was an ongoing problem. Withdrawal itself seemed to heighten the feelings of the boys involved, of being less competent and being 'different'. To accommodate the move to in-class support , the three classes across the grade were regrouped on an ability basis for English and Maths. So for Reading, Year 6 have the class teacher, Literacy Support teacher, STLD (Support Teacher - Learning difficulty) and ESL teacher in their room supporting the low progress readers. This grouping has been well received by students, teachers and parents due to the flexibility and acknowledgement of individual differences.

DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS

Peer Relations

Here, a two pronged approach was used. As the Committee felt morally obligated to assist those students identified, we decided on using an intervention program. We selected a withdrawal program designed by Lorraine Corne (Consulting Psychologist) to address the development of social skills for a number of reasons. She had a teaching background and a clear understanding of children in a primary school setting. Her program was based on 'Skillstreaming' and 'Stop, Think, Do', was already in use in her private practice. Lastly, her methodology was in line with Choice Theory/Reality Therapy.

Lorraine met weekly with small groups of between 4 and 6 students from Kindergarten to Years 6 for ten weeks. Of the thirty students involved in this program, twenty two were boys (73%). The weekly workshops consisted of dialogue between students led by Lorraine, role playing of particular skills and scenarios and finished with an informal drink and cake. The latter was to provide the opportunity for students to feel what it is like to be part of a group and to start and maintain conversation with peers. The size of the groups meant they could have individual attention if required but also interact with others, share and understand their personal concerns and other children's problems.

Unexpected Outcomes

An unexpected outcome of these groups was the new friendships formed amongst participants. Teachers and parents were required to monitor these students' progress throughout the ten weeks. Significant changes in almost all of the students were noted. Teachers in particular commented upon the changes in behaviour and attitude. Students themselves were visibly enthusiastic about these group workshops.

Parent response was varied, particularly those who were uncomfortable about the identification and target of their child as having poor peer relations or social skills. Some expected a ten-week series of workshops would dramatically improve home life. The opportunity for parents to work with Lorraine, at their own expense, on their family dynamics was made available. Generally speaking though the majority of parents were pleased with the withdrawal program and the outcomes for their children. A number of parents wrote to the school saying it was a turning point for their child's sense of wellbeing and happiness

Lessons

We found that the naming of these groups was significant. Even though the program was funded as part of the Self Esteem initiative, it was very important to focus on the competency aspect: the further development of social skills. If we were to run this withdrawal program again we would promote it more strongly from the very outset as a social competency program , not self esteem per se, as the children became known as the Self Esteem group. If time had permitted we would have spoken to the parents within the context of the half yearly Parent - Teacher interviews rather than in writing.

Year 5

Running concurrently with Lorraine's small group withdrawal program we also had a withdrawal program for boys in Year 5, lasting two terms. This year level had a peer group that exhibited a number of problematic behaviours including aggression, putdowns, poor self-image and with few social skills. We utilised the services of the School Counsellor and the District Itinerant Teacher, Behaviour, to work specifically and intensively on developing social competencies. Their work with small groups of 8 was also based on 'Skillstreaming', 'Stop Think, Do' and 'Classroom 41'. These groups included boys who were positive role models from the grade in terms of social skills as well as those needing development in this area.

This group is still not easy but, now in Year 6, their capacity for co- operation and working together as a group has improved and the level of putdowns decreased

School-wide Social Skilling

On the preventative side, all teachers were released from class for a three- hour training session in the explicit teaching of social skills. Again this was funded by the P & C. A whole school program was developed, also based on 'Skillstreaming'. This program varies in content from grade to grade and is to be implemented in Term 1 of every year. It deals with such skills as

" listening,
" expressing your feelings,
" joining in a game,
" dealing with losing,
" dealing with being left out,
" dealing with group pressure,
" reacting to failure.

Maintaining The Gains

To evaluate the need for further initiatives on self esteem, we asked the District's Student Welfare Consultant to survey students in Term 4, 1997. Using interviews and questionnaires, his survey of students K - 6 revealed no specific area of concern regarding self esteem and that, generally speaking, students reported themselves as 'being happy at school'.

Our Literacy Support Program and Social Skills Program have continued this year and are planned and funded for next year as well. The Social Skills Program is planned for evaluation next year. We decided not to proceed with a withdrawal program as social skill development was now taking place in a classroom context and because withdrawal was seen negatively by some parents .

The Literacy Support Program will be evaluated in the final three weeks of the year. Students are formally assessed prior to entering the program and upon exit, or at the end of the year (whichever comes first) using the Neale Analysis of Reading, Form 1 and 2, and Educheck for younger students. Their progress throughout the program is monitored through use of miscue analysis and/or running records. The success of this program is voiced over and over again by the parents in particular. Results gathered by the Learning Support Team would support this. Parents are so committed to this program that the P & C has voted to increase its funding for next year's program.

We now include social skills as part of our assessment and reporting plan. We have developed a written report involving teachers' and students' assessment in Term 1 and Term 4 on the social skills taught in the school wide program. The students set goals after Term 1.

Looking back, the most important thing was getting expert input at the beginning so everyone was working from the same mental model. Throughout the entire year, the regular parent forums kept the school community talking about self esteem and what it really meant for parenting.

Reprinted from Boys in Schools Bulletin No 4.

Affirming Boys' Roles in Red House

By Jura Reilly, Red House Coordinator, Belmont High School, Geelong VIC

Belmont High School is a large secondary school with 618 male and 486 female students and 80 teachers. The school operates a Year 7 to 12 vertical system of eight Houses to provide a supportive and caring environment for the students. The House system also provides opportunities for social activities organised

by senior students or by the 10 or so staff attached to each House. As Red House Coordinator, I am responsible for discipline, pastoral care and overseeing the academic and social development of all students within my House. I work with a team of 6 Form Teachers, my Assistant Coordinator and consult regularly with the parents of 175 students, the administrative team and outside welfare agencies. This year Red House has 51 female and 83 male students, mirroring the imbalance between boys' and girls' numbers across the School.

When I was appointed as a Sub-School Manager in 1989, Red House senior male students were not used to having a female House Coordinator, and even now only two of the eight House Coordinators are women. These male students challenged my authority and decisions. To win the boys over, we set up parent-teacher interviews where we discussed the idea that in senior years these boys would have positions of responsibility. Further, I expressed my hope that their potential for leadership would not be spoilt by immature behaviour. Banning them from excursions for a Term if they repeated their actions made them realise that they would forgo activities they had enjoyed.

Every Coordinator in Victoria can tell you that most of the discipline problems come from Years 9 & 10 male students who invariably have to cope with bullying, peer pressure to smoke and drink, conditions such as ADD and general risk-taking behaviour patterns. After attending the Boys in Schools Conference in 1997 and Bill Rogers' Conferences on dealing with difficult behaviours, I made several suggestions at the student management meeting. The School adopted the policy that if House Coordinators were male then the assistants should be female.

Increased Responsibility

Each House at Belmont High School elects its own House and Sports Captains. Over the years I have found that by giving the students increased areas of responsibility has often led to rises in the boys' self-esteem. Student acceptance of greater responsibility came about as a result of a Red House Review held in 1996 - 1997. For example, all staff noticed an improvement once students had been approached to run House Assemblies, as a result of surveys and House policy discussions.

Most of my Year 12 boys have, on the whole, been positive role models. In Year 11, these students have acted as Peer Support Leaders for incoming year 7 students, organising local excursions to Macdonalds and Pizza Hut. For the Year 7 boys who do not have access to fathers through the effects of family break-ups, these Year 11 boys play a valuable role in the younger students' social and emotional development. The fact that these male students did take an interest in the next Year 7 students, has shown that the Peer Support system has a life-span longer than the one term.

The Year 12 boys in Red House also act as Team Managers for the annual Swimming and Athletics Carnivals, so again boys of different ages experience bonding, this time through sport. Such development stages and accompanying rituals as barracking for teams, wearing House colours, making banners & clowning around, provide the junior boys with positive behavioural examples.

Mediation

In the last few years, Belmont HS has held Mediation courses for Year 10 students and this year my group of three boys has been invaluable in settling disputes amongst the junior boys in the area of harassment and bullying. The mediators report results of the mediation sessions to me and often a contract between the two disputants is signed. Often, I do not hear any more of such mediated disputes. One boy mediator had been in serious trouble in his junior years after the death of his father. I watch him with pride as he now serves on the Anti-Bullying Committee and addresses the staff confidently, presenting a student's point of view.

Harassment, Apology & Restitution

A school's culture is invariably a critical factor determining the interaction between students and staff.

DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS

As Coordinator I make male students personally apologise to female students or to teachers they have harassed or bullied, pointing out that the School's rules do mirror those of our society . Two Year 10 boys in particular have improved their behaviour after several incidents and raised money for the Anti-Cancer Council to make up for harassing one of their teachers. In practice I use Bill Rogers' approach and ask the student to confront a range of serious questions.

Thinking about my behaviour, what did I do?
What rule was broken?
What is my side of the story?
How can I fix this?

Such a process of self-confrontation and recognition of wrong-doing more readily leads to an apology and then, more importantly, to restitution.

Scholarships
When scholarships are announced, I personally ask students to apply for them by giving out the forms. Often the parents of such boys are enthusiastic when someone outside of the immediate family takes a personal interest in their son.

House Assemblies
I make sure the House Captains give out the Sports Awards and publicly thank the Captains in the School Newsletter. The Year 12s at that point in the year had not undertaken any Social Service and so I asked them to work on the Papua-New Guinea Tidal Wave Appeal Raffle with Year 9 volunteers. At House Assembly our Boy House Captain successfully urged all of our students to support the appeal, which he and another Year 12 male student had organised.

Homework Clubs
Some after school homework clubs are organised on a House basis, others by the Administration. In the Year 7 Club there are eight boys and two girls, and in the year 8 Club there are eight boys only. These clubs are friendly, helpful and the boys are rewarded with supplies from the Canteen for their persistence. Boys are invited to attend the club after House Coordinators have informed the Vice-Principal of those who are behind in their work.

Lunchtime Events
I encouraged a Year 9 male student to conduct an Inter-House Skateboarding Competition at lunchtime with equipment loaned by the City of Greater Geelong. He displayed great initiative, raising sponsorships from local firms and getting other students to act as judges. I had enlisted the support of an Assistant Principal and the boy's Form Teacher. It was the biggest lunchtime event ever seen at the school and will become an annual event.

Cross-Age Mentoring
Inspired by a Middle School in service, this year I set up the Year 10 Red group students to act as Mentors to the Year 7 Red class. All told, 28 boys and 17 girls participated. They led an Integrated Curriculum Activity across three Key Learning Areas. I enlisted the support of other teachers. Over four sessions the two classes developed and presented plays about peer pressure. Two male teachers adjudicated, the Principal came to watch and prizes were presented for the Best Play. Again, the students saw their work written up in the School Newsletter. In the evaluation, a third of the Year 10 boys were not particularly enthusiastic, but the others wanted to continue this activity later in Term 4 so they could become better Peer Support Leaders when it was their turn next year. For me the benefit was in seeing the Year 10 boys working confidently with the juniors in their group, even though initially they had found it hard to agree on the ways they were going to proceed.

DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS

After 10 Years in Red House

Giving advice to colleagues is always difficult, but I think I can validly draw upon my experiences. I believe that it is important to acknowledge there are differences in learning styles between boys and girls. Then I would argue that we should make use of Bloom's Taxonomy as a tool to give students wider choices in approaching work requirements. I go into classes knowing that boys will inevitably take up more of my time as they lag at least two years behind same-age girls in social maturity. Their successes need to be celebrated by praise in the School Newsletter and other channels of communication. In English and other language-based studies, boys in particular need to be encouraged to write about personal experience, not copy "Terminator" and other banal movie plots. Finally, boys need to be encouraged to take on responsibility right down the School: if Year 9s want to run a Skateboard Competition, let *them* do it.

Reprinted from Boys in Schools Bulletin No 4.

FAMILY ACTION CENTRE
of The University of Newcastle

Vision: A Truly Civil Society *Mission:* Building Community

Family Action Centre is an independently constituted Centre of the University of Newcastle. Since commencing in 1986 with one small funded project, the Centre has gradually expanded its focus to more holistically accomplish its mission of building community.

Family Action Centre builds community by supporting family well-being

Family is the cornerstone of society. It requires support and nurturence. Family Action Centre supports family well-being through innovative programs that meet family needs and contribute to the health of the community.

The **Caravan Project** assists families who are permanent residents of caravan parks and mobile home villages through playgroups, social activities and one to one assistance to provide support, information and links with services in the community.

The **Home-Start** home visiting program and **Homelink,** providing academic and personal support for school students both use trained volunteers to offer practical support to families who lack a support system. The **International Student Care Program** links trained volunteers with a student from another culture who is studying at the University of Newcastle.

The Men and Boys Project offers a resaerch and training consultancy to schools, health, and welfare organisations in the areas of Men's Health and Boys Education.

Family Action Centre recognises that programs alone will not bring about positive social change. It therefore undertakes an advocacy role on behalf of marginalised groups, and disseminates important findings through a national network.

Family Action Centre also acknowledges the vital role of training in community building . The Centre's **Training Enterprise** offers training to institutional, corporate and community bodies to promote social cohesion, personal and self responsibility.

All Centre activities are underpinned by an **Action Research** methodology that ensures input from all stakeholders into evaluation and ongoing program design.

THE MEN AND BOYS PROGRAM

The program is based in the **FAMILY ACTION CENTRE** at the University of Newcastle, NSW. The Family Action Centre delivers support programs to marginalised and transient families using staff co-ordinators and trained volunteers. Action research, dissemination of information at all levels and advocacy are core features of the Centre's activities. Since the Men and Boys Program was set up in 1996 (initially as The Men's Health Project), men's and boy's well being has become a broad community concern reaching into areas of education, juvenile justice, cancer screening, fathering and suicide. At the start of 1997 The Men's Health Project was reorganized to reflect the broader focus of the Family Action Centre. The three projects which make up the Men and Boys Program are :

The FatherCare Initiative - encouraging positive father involvement in communities
Men's Health - research and teaching for better health
Boyswork - working with schools and with boys to improve boys' wellbeing

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